The Wild Goose

Gouverneur Morris

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BY GOUVERNEUR MORRIS

THE WILD GOOSE

HIS DAUGHTER

WHEN MY SHIP COMES IN

THE SEVEN DARLINGS

THE INCANDESCENT LILY

THE PENALTY

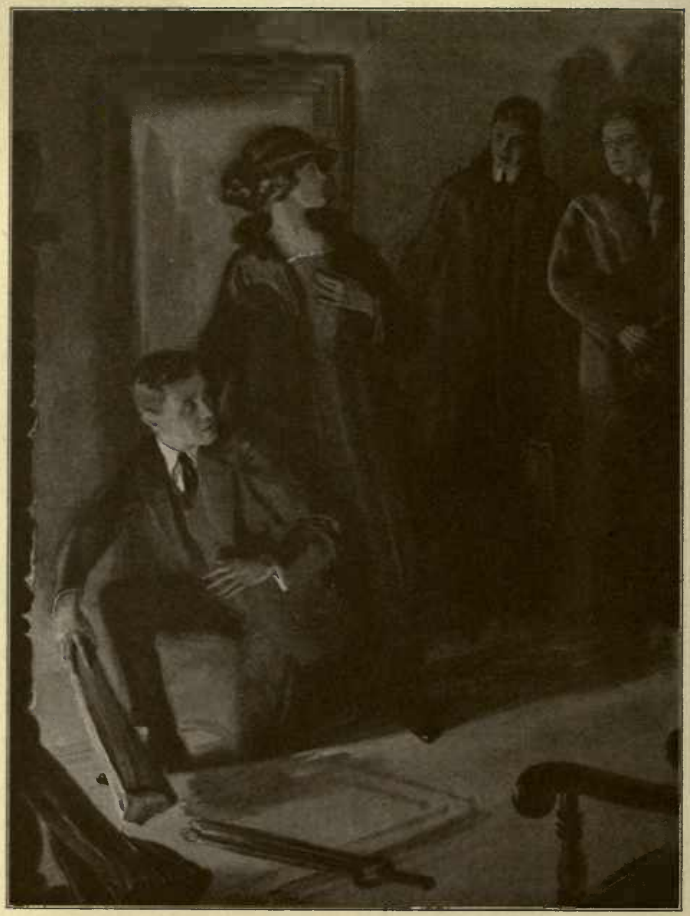
IT, AND OTHER STORIES

THE SPREAD EAGLE, AND OTHER STORIES

THE FOOTPRINT, AND OTHER STORIES

IF YOU TOUCH THEM THEY VANISH

CHARLES SCRIBNER'S SONS



"It is perfectly safe for you to come out from behind my wife"

THE WILD GOOSE

By

Gouverneur Morris

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THE WILD GOOSE

CHAPTER I

FRANCIS MANNERS woke up one morning with the feeling that he was a long way from home, and that he had been away a long time, and that he ought not to stay away any longer. "Ought" is a strong feeling; and there was no reason which he knew of to justify it. He had gone to bed with the feeling that he could not finish his work in California before the middle of April; and he had waked the next morning—a blustery one near the end of February—with the feeling that he ought to go home at once.

This, however, was impracticable. In order to pay his most pressing obligations he had undertaken in a moment (which he now felt to have been a dark one) to fresco the dining-room walls of Mrs. Cooper Appleyard's new house, and he had still to make the preliminary sketch for the end with the two doors. And this sketch of course had to be made among the surroundings from which it was to draw its inspiration. Mrs. Cooper Appleyard's new house was to be Californian inside and out.

With the thought that he could perhaps get the sketch finished by April Fool's Day, he turned on the cold water in his bathtub and began to shave. While he was shaving he told himself that he really ought to go home at once.

The inside of his bathroom door was one sheet of looking-glass; and when he had finished shaving his right cheek he consulted this to see if he was developing a stomach. His wife had once told him laughingly that she would never forgive him if he did, and, as she had a laughing way of saying things that she really meant, sooner than go back to her looking as if he had swallowed a melon Manners would have taken drastic measures. He observed with satisfaction that his contours were still those of a young man, and that the gray hairs above his temples were still so few as to be enumerable.

He freshened the lather on the left side of his face and finished shaving. Then he got into the very cold water which he had been drawing, and sat down with a gasp of real pain. He had the idea that disagreeable things were good for him; but there was little danger that he would ever become perfect through overindulgence in them. He preferred that mediocrity which distinguishes those who habitually pursue the agreeable: agreeable foods, drinks, surroundings, temperatures, people. If there had been nothing agreeable about cold baths he would have taken them hot. But the real pleasure of getting out of one more than made up for the pain of getting in. And, passing from tubs to triumphs, from the pleasures of the body to those of the soul, wiser men than Francis Manners have agreed that the way to heaven lies through purgatory.

During a few moments of violent friction he hadn't a care in the world; and then as he stood on one foot (occasionally hopping sideways or backward or for-

ward to keep his balance) and drawing a black-silk sock over the other, his serenity was once more disturbed by the feeling that he really ought to go home.

He was subject to sudden intuitions, especially where his wife and daughter were concerned. That more often than not these turned out to be groundless did not alter his faith in them, or his wife's dread of them. In the past her husband's intuitions had more than once precipitated those difficult situations for which her own impulses had been responsible.

At the moment, so far as Francis Manners knew, all was serene between them. That is to say, as serene as things ever could be. For the husband had long since abandoned any real hope of that perfect marital serenity for which he had given the best that was in him to give, and to which he might have been thought, because of his great faithfulness in loving, to have acquired a title that was without law. He was forty years old, but he could look his wife in the eyes and say truthfully: "My darling, I have loved you for almost a generation."

The love which seemed as definite a part of Francis Manners's nature as his feeling for form and color was a victorious love. It had triumphed over such failures toward it as would have doomed a lesser love to an early death, and caused it perhaps to turn, thereafter, in its grave. Of course he loved his wife in this way because he couldn't help it. He couldn't help it any more than he could help the shape of his ears; but he was human enough to take the kind of pride in it which should more definitely have been reserved for those accomplishments for which he was

more or less responsible. To be proud of his eye for color would have been childish, since he had been born with it; to have been proud of the technique which enabled him to make good use of color would have been sensible. He was proud of neither. He was proud only of that faithfulness in loving which had cost him no effort whatsoever; and yet people spoke of him as a proud man. One thing is certain: both in his love for Diana and in his aversion to cold water he was very human.

Manners was too great a swell by birth and achievement to care very much how his clothes were put on, and he dressed himself, as a rule, in something under seven minutes. But this morning he loitered about his room in various stages of deshabille and smoked a number of cigarets. And during this period of procrastination he came to a number of decisions and admissions. But none of these was sufficient to shake the stability of the feeling with which he had waked.

Of course, if Diana was in a real difficulty of any kind she would telegraph him to come home. She would telegraph him, for instance, if their little daughter were seriously ill. But if, on the other hand, she was only in a half-difficulty she would not telegraph.

He read over half-a-dozen of her short letters, selected at random, and covering the whole period of their three months' separation. And he noted that her last letter of all, the one that he had received the day before, was dated Sunday. In this fact there was of course nothing disturbing. What disturbed him was the knowledge that the letter had been written in town, and not in the country.

He now gathered all her letters together and went through them with a view to finding out when they had been written and where. And although a number were not dated at all it was conclusively shown that a large majority, especially during the last two months, had been written in town. Three of these were dated Sunday.

It had been agreed between them that when he had to be away on business she would manage, much as the city amused her, to spend most of the week looking after their small daughter "Tam" in the country. They shared the theory that one of them ought almost always to be with Tam. They were firmly determined that Tam should not grow up spoiled and selfish, and if left too much to the indulgence of Diana's mother, Mrs. Langham, who lived with them, some such corruption of a fine little character was to be feared.

Diana, then, was neglecting Tam. Of course he ought to go home! Talk of intuition! But it was no thought of the neglected Tam, wrapped about his heart though she was, that made him suddenly experience a kind of anxious excitement. At the back of all his thoughts there was always the vague dread of what Diana might suddenly feel that she *must do next.* In the last analysis, he sometimes thought. Diana's wishes and inclinations were her sole means of judging what was right and what was wrong. In this of course he did her injustice. The truth was that Diana's sense of right and wrong did not always control her conduct.

What was Diana up to now?

He would go home for a few days, just long enough to find out what was wrong, and to make it right if he could. Then he would come back to California and peacefully finish the sketches for Mrs. Appleyard's dining-room. The expense of the trip to a man who was trying very hard to be economical himself so that another might spend bothered him a little. It would be hard to explain to Diana his sudden return to New York; especially it would be hard if her reasons for being so much away from Tam were merely the usual reasons: love of people, love of excitement, and a restless energy which only bodily activity could calm.

He could not in the present instance help suspecting that there must be a more specific reason. He rather thought that she must have taken a sudden fancy to some new "crowd" (almost a habit of hers), who in return (a habit of theirs) had taken an immense fancy to her. In such cases one party leads to another so naturally and pleasantly that all sense of time and proportion is easily lost sight of.

Diana, then, was simply having a mad, glad time. He could visualize her. When she was excited and in high spirits there was no prettier woman in New York. His heart beat more quickly at the thought. But even the most amusing crowds in New York usually leave the city to its dull fate on Sunday; and here was Diana spending a good many of her Sundays in town!

CHAPTER II

"YES, SIR! You may take it from me—a wild goose gander has got us men skinned to a frazzle!"

The insistent old duck-hunter who had scraped acquaintance with Manners in the smoking compartment slapped his thigh and repeated "You may take it from me."

Manners had grown to like the old fellow. He liked a great many people in a great many walks of life, and his dislikes were few. Most of the people whom he really disliked were people whom he did not even know to speak to.

The old duck-hunter talked a great deal; but he was not a boaster. He was interesting, too. For he had observed even more than he had shot, and with training might have been an eminent naturalist.

The train was east of Omaha, and it was long past the hour at which Manners usually turned in when he was traveling. There had been something about the old duck-hunter's accounts of the habits of wild geese that had made the quarter hours pass in quick succession. He had mixed his discursive narrative with observations upon men and women and their habits, and without intention, probably, he had succeeded in showing Manners into a heart that was at once kind and shrewd. He had lost his wife when he was a young man, and he had never cared about any other woman. To that extent he himself had much

in common with a wild goose. But there the resemblance ceased. He had meant to be faithful to his wife's memory in all ways; spiritual and technical. But in the latter way he had failed. He regretted this, but not poignantly. If they were to meet hereafter in the Happy Hunting-Ground (as he put it), she would understand and forgive. "And besides," he had misquoted, "if in the days of Innocency even Adam fell, what should poor Jack Falstaff do in these days of villainy?"

"But the old wild goose," he said, "if he lost his wife when he was only six or seven years old he'd be faithful to her memory in thought and deed till the day of his death. Often they live to be a hundred."

Somehow there came into Manners's mind a vision of wild wintry hills, and of an old gray goose flying high through the clear, piercing cold with the piled-up anguish of eighty years of grief tearing at his wild and faithful heart. In such a love as that there was a something of chaos and infinity, he felt; a something not of this world. The starkness and loneliness of such loving appalled him. Where did the dumb bird find the will to go on living through the long generations? Surely, he thought, he must want to end it all and die. And perhaps there's just the terrible part of it. He wants death. Every waking moment for eighty years he has wanted nothing but death, and he doesn't know how to die. He doesn't know how to kill himself.

He spoke his thought, and the old duck-hunter said: "I'm not sure. They vary so in knowingness. Once—well, it may have been a case of suicide, and

again it may not. It was an old gray goose—almost white he was—came down to me all alone—dropped right out of the flock which had taken alarm, and sailed down to me from a mile up and more than a mile away—sailed down with his wings set—and, almost right into me. It was no accident. He was so close that I could see his eyes. He was looking right at me, and he wasn't afraid. I was so flabbergasted I missed. He passed over, and made a great swinging circle, and then he came right for me again: He wanted *his*. . . . In all my gunning I've never seen the like of that. The second time I let him have it where—well, Mr. Manners, I let him have it where I think he wanted it. . . . Makes you shiver when you think of a poor dumb creature mourning like that for its mate."

"But how could you know that he'd lost his mate?"

"She'd have been with him if she'd been living, and if she'd been with him she'd have come down with him."

Upon an impulse which was quite new to him in his experience of himself, Manners pulled from his pocket a small leather case in which he had a photograph of Diana and Tam, and showed it to a stranger. He could not have explained why he did this, nor why he chose to take that stranger still further into his confidence.

"I'm something of a wild goose myself," he said simply; "we've been married for ten years, and I've loved her for more than twenty. She's a lot younger than I am, of course; so I don't have to worry about what I'd do if I was left behind."

He smiled, and, after glancing at the photograph, closed the case, and returned it to his pocket.

"But you're young yourself," said the old duck-hunter. His only comment upon the photograph had been to point to Tam and say "She's some kid!"

"Yes," said Manners, "I suppose I am. But I'm forty."

"O Lord, please bless and keep my Di and my Tam, and make them perfectly happy always. And I'd like to be happy, too. And I'm going to be a better father and husband, and not so selfish all the time."

Francis Manners had no set time for praying, and he seldom prayed. It is not sure that he even believed in God, or in a future life. He thought very little about either. But it is equally sure that he sometimes addressed God by name and asked him for things. He was especially given to this at night when Tam and Diana were asleep, and the day had seemed, perhaps, to hold out promises of better days to come. He was easily discouraged and easily encouraged. To have possessed a not-unwilling Diana gave him always a mood of wonderful exaltation in which he almost believed that she was done with her traipsings and would end by loving him again, as she had loved him in the beginning. And then all would indeed be well. But the next Diana was apt to be an unwilling Diana, so that for self-reproach he could not sleep. And the next Diana after that might well prove to be an absolutely impossible Diana. And thereafter, of course, the future darkened, and he knew that nothing would ever really be well with them again.

At such times he wished to heaven that he could think of some way of ending it all.

There was too much blood in his head, or else the train made too much noise. He set many snares for sleep but they enmeshed nothing. He was in for one of those nights when uninvited thoughts run in circles and trivial things become magnified until they cast shadows across life itself. But his thoughts were not all unpleasant, and lingered rosily at times over those years with Diana which had contained for them both, as nearly as may be, the sum of all human blisses.

He liked to think of himself as an unselfish man. But he was not. He could, however, be immensely generous, which is a very different thing, and his night thoughts were often brightened with immolations and self-sacrificings, which in a few more minutes of thinking became so modified with conditions and complexities as to lose their brightness. In short, he could not in any horoscope of Diana's future leave himself out. He wondered if this was due to some fault in his character, or to the fact that the roots of their two lives were indeed inextricably intertwined. Loving her he could not of course be only her friend, nor view and review her altogether from the standpoint of mere friendship.

Sooner or later his thoughts always turned to the first great trouble between them, that trouble which had fallen upon him, innocent and undeserving, out of a clear sky, and the dread of whose recrudescence or recurrence always lurked deep in his being, ready to leap up without warning, and, like the knowledge of some dreadful inheritance that must some day

have its way with him, to destroy his peace and impugn his sanity.

It is doubtful if, from his first inklings of the great trouble, any of his waking hours had been wholly free from its influence. It is certain that since that moment he had never, as so very often before, painted anything that was wholly gay and joyous. It was an inconsiderable compensation to know that the wistfulness and melancholy which had crept into his work had increased its market value. The gaiety and joyousness of the old mood could well have founded and maintained a home.

He thought of the little house that he had built with his first earnings and the help of his bank. The dear house, and the dear fields and orchards; and the brook that made music when all the other voices of the night were still. He thought of the low-ceilinged, sweet, clean room that had been his and Diana's, of Diana's dressing-table of white muslin with the big silver mirror, and of Diana sitting before that mirror by candle-light and looping up her hair.

He thought of their broad bed, and of the fresh night air; fresh, in that remote hill country, even on the hottest nights. And of the great, sweet freshness of the early mornings; of waking and resting on his elbow and watching Diana until she waked. Always in those days she had waked smiling like a happy child; and with but the one thought, to be taken quickly into his arms, as he had but the one thought: to take her. She was like an armful of roses.

The little house was to have been home. It was to have grown this way and that; grown as his fame

grew and his earning power; grown as his love grew and his tribe increased.

When they had left the little house for good and all—left it for the impatient modern reason that it was a little out of the way of people who lived in other houses, and that it doesn't really do to get sunk in the country, Manners had left behind him a certain something of that precious quality which opposes change. He would never again know days and nights that had in them so much of heaven. And yet the mood in which he had departed with Diana from the little house had had in it more of sentiment than regret. It had seemed to him that since he was taking Diana with him there could be nothing really worth regretting. Still, when she was all ready in the closed motor, and his foot was on the step, he had said, "Wait, I forgot!" And he had darted back into their house and up to their room, and he had given it, with the gray eyes that missed nothing, one panoramic look that should fix it in his memory forever, and he had knelt suddenly and touched his lips to the floor.

They were going to Newport for the summer. They could not afford to go to Newport. But when he had said that they could not afford to go a shadow had crossed Diana's face, the first that had ever crossed it since she had told him that she loved him, and—they were going to Newport.

When they crossed the bridge he had thrust his head out of the car window and looked back; only the roof of the little house and the two white chimneys showed above the lilacs. The lilacs were in full bloom. They were purple and white.

Many times since that day Francis Manners had, in imagination, left the little house for the last time. But the mere sentiment of that first actual going had been succeeded in the imaginary departures by an ever-growing regret, and of grief even that was akin to anguish. For the house had come to be the symbol of the thing that was never to be; no, not though, like Ulysses, he went through hell to attain it. He might work until his eyes cracked, and he might love until his heart broke, but there could never be for him a home with the voices of many children in the porches.

The line of an old song went through his mind:

"My home is not built, and my son is not born."

He still owned the little house and a semi-annual interest payment on the mortgage would be due on the first day of April. He kept a caretaker, a man who knew a whole lot about plants, and it was simply wonderful how the garden had come on.

He had never been a coward; and Diana had wished him to see their child born. He would never forget that wild winter day and night in her mother's house. The nurse was a fool. She lost her nerve completely. Manners himself, gray with fright and the agony that was his, too, had taken the chloroform cone from the nurse's hysterical hand, and her place at the head of the bed. He had followed the doctor's instructions as methodically and accurately as if he had been trained to the work. Through the night, at intervals, Diana's mother had come into the room. She seemed to know just what was going on at the moment without look-

ing. She had taken off her dress and put on instead a blue-silk dressing-gown. It had sleeves to the elbow finished off with flounces of soft lace. She would stand with one elbow and forearm resting on the mantelpiece. She had been perfectly calm and matter-of-fact. But her face, that was as beautiful as Diana's, looked as if it had been carved out of gray granite.

Diana's hair had been done into very tight pig-tails. She had on a pair of Manners's heavy golf stockings, absurdly big for her, because in spite of the coal fire that roared in the grate and the hot air that came from the furnace, the room was too cold. They had kept her covered as much as possible. They had spared her all the pain that could be spared her.

There were no idle moments for Manners. He administered the chloroform. He held her hand tight —tight. He made love to her, in a loud voice, so that his words might pierce the veils of chloroform and give her courage.

"Dearest Darling Frank! Dearest Darling Frank!" Even in the midst of unspeakable agony that cry of love and of trust had been wrung from her again and again.

O God! How they had loved each other through the horrors of that night! Manners had thought that she was going to die. Even the doctor had grown very anxious toward the end, and had glanced more and more often toward that dish of sterilized instruments which serve their end when it has become evident that of two lives only one can be saved.

But the instruments had remained in the dish. Diana was wonderfully strong. And her time, though

it had been very long and very hard, had been as normal as the time of a wild animal. There had been a cry fine as a needle, and Diana had asked a question.

"Why, Diana," the doctor had said, after hastily assuring himself, "it seems to be a girl."

Manners had had but one thought: "She must never know that he had hoped for a boy." He had knelt swiftly and taken her oh, so tenderly, in his arms, and his face close to hers had whispered "It's a girl, my darling, and I'm so glad—so *glad!*"

Then they had both begun to cry, their tears mingling, and the doctor had spoken sharply to Manners.

She had slept and she had waked.

"I won't ever have another," she had cried suddenly. "Never. And you mustn't ask me to, you mustn't ask me to!"

A queer, pained look had come into Manners's face. She was blaming him, and holding him responsible for that which neither of them had thought to bring about or to evade. Their little daughter had simply happened.

The doctor had touched Manners on the shoulder and said: "Diana doesn't know what she is saying."

But the sleeping Diana had known perfectly well. And thereafter she was to stick to what she had said. At least so far as Manners was concerned.

It is not to be doubted that for a number of years Diana Manners had been more concerned with her husband's welfare than with his happiness. If he went upon a journey she busied herself over the details of his packing and of his departure with some-

thing of the same look that had been so often in her eyes during the first years of their marriage. No one could get things better done or more expeditiously than Diana. She had immense energy and a genius for the telephone. And what she could do well, swiftly and without mistakes, she very naturally enjoyed doing. That, and no sense of wifely duty, was most likely the reason why she always insisted upon packing her husband's things. It was in 1910 that she had forgotten to put in the little box in which he kept the studs for his evening shirts. He could not remember any other omission during all the years of their marriage.

She was very fond of her husband; and behind his back stood up for his opinions and admired him —immensely; but to his face she seldom praised his work or seemed to agree with his opinions. It was much easier for her to find fault with the cut of his coat or the color of his tie than to tell him that she was proud to be seen with him, because now that the lines of character in his face had begun to deepen he was getting to look distinguished.

Diana would not go higher than the third story in a hotel, for fear of fires; and for other people, though by no means for herself, she was afraid of journeys by ship or train. To have telegraphed her that he was coming home would have meant for Diana a certain amount of anxiety (not very poignant, of course), and it had hardly even occurred to Manners to do so. And he had reason to think that the surprise of his sudden and unexpected appearance had still an element that would afford her pleasure. She

was very fond of him. He knew that and depended on the durability of that feeling. But he couldn't help wishing that she would show her fondness for him oftener and talk about it more. She was not demonstrative.

Why he had come home in this sudden and unexpected manner would be hard to explain. "I just felt that I ought to come home" was hardly an explanation; and it was certainly not a good excuse for spending a lot of money when money was scarce, and for delaying the execution of a handsome commission. He had already tried it on Mrs. Appleyard, and she had shown plainly that though she considered him very charming, she was disgusted with him for so arbitrarily and unreasonably holding up the completion of her new house. Artists, she had told him, were all alike. They were all spoiled children.

Why *did* he feel that he ought to go home? The intuition upon which he had acted could not be resolved into anything definite. It might mean that Tam was a little sick; but nothing to worry about; or that Diana was. It might, with more likelihood, turn out that Diana had already spent all the money which he had been able to place to her account. It might mean any of a dozen things. But if he had thought that his sudden and unexpected appearance might be embarrassing to Diana he would, of course, have telegraphed. If he had ever had the impulse to spy upon Diana's actions he had at least punctiliously refrained from doing so. And although he had reason to believe that her heart was not to be relied on, he trusted her as men trust women who are frank,

clean-minded and truthful. Diana might throw her cap over the windmill; but she would first tell him that she was going to.

There was one person to whom the explanation which he intended to give of his home-coming would be sufficient and convincing. He would tell Tam that he had come home because he could not bear to stay away from her any longer.

With thoughts of the welcome that he would have from Tam peace came to him. He no longer tried to account for the intuition that was hurrying him home, and, his sheets and blankets in a cindery snarl, he settled into the position in which sleep would presently find him, and a little later dreamed that he was an old gray goose who had lost his mate, and could not bear to live any longer, and that he was volplaning down from the skies straight for the muzzle of a double-barreled shotgun. . . .

CHAPTER III

FRANCIS MANNERS kept out of the city as much as possible. And the small apartment which he rented in the Sixties was usually spoken of as his wife's. It was almost entirely for her convenience that the small suite of small rooms had been rented at all, and in the choice of the wall-papers, chintzes and furnishings his taste had not been consulted. Nor had Diana given free rein to her own. Her taste ran to extremely expensive simplicity. And although the effect of the apartment was simple enough, it had been achieved at a very small expense. Only the linen and the toilet articles on Diana's dressing-table showed that she could be extravagant.

Francis Manners had driven directly from the Grand Central Station to his club in 43rd Street. From there he had telephoned first to his house in Old Westbury.

Tam had reached an age when she delighted to answer the telephone, and when he heard her shrill voice saying: "Who is it, plis?" he began to tremble all over.

"Who are you?" he asked in a disguised voice. He heard the receiver drop. He heard her crying: "It's Fazzer! It's Fazzer."

Then he heard the cool and quiet voice of Diana's mother. There was laughter in it.

"Tam is so excited that she can't speak," she said. "But where are you?"

"In New York. Is Diana there?"

Something told him that Diana was not there, or she would by now be audible in the family group at the other end of the telephone.

"Diana went to town yesterday. Have you telephoned the apartment?"

"Thought I'd try home first. Did she intend to come out to the country this afternoon, or don't you know?"

"She said she would try. But of course you'll find her and bring her out. You can't very well say what train, can you? But what brings you back?"

"One thing and another. Are you all well?

"Very. Tam especially."

"Isn't that fine!" he exclaimed. "Isn't that fine!"

"Wait a moment. Tam seems to think she can speak now." Again the child's shrill voice started up the beating of his heart.

"I couldn't believe it was you," she said, "I was so excited."

"I wish you could just see how excited father is," said Manners. "He's shaking like a leaf on a tree. And he's going to come out to the country just as soon as ever he possibly can find mother and catch a train, and of course the quicker you and I stop talking, the quicker I can find mother, and so my own darling good-by to you, and take good care of yourself." He stepped out of the booth and gave the number of Diana's apartment.

Diana's maid, Hilda, answered him, and told him

that Mrs. Manners had gone out for lunch; she, Hilda, could not say where. He also gathered that when his wife went out to lunch she nearly always came back about three. He had counted somehow on getting in touch with Diana at once, and he came out of the booth with an unreasonable feeling of depression. The truth was that he was very tired after his long journey across the continent; tired bodily, optically, and mentally.

He telephoned to Sherry's, Delmonico's and the Colony Club, but Diana was at none of these. And as it was now a quarter before two he felt that he ought to think of his own lunch. This in the end, thought he had also ordered chicken livers Aquitaine, consisted of half-a-dozen Cotuit oysters and a cup of *café au lait.* The keen appetite with which he had entered the club had left him. He did not feel like speaking to anyone, but for once he seemed to know half the men in the dining-room, and as he had been away so long many of them came to his table to welcome him back, so that he was half an hour over a meal that shouldn't have wasted ten minutes.

It was half-past two when he put down his traveling bag in the tiny entrance-hall of Diana's apartment, and looked at his watch. He would have to wait at least half an hour before he saw her. And if not interminable, it seemed at the least an important period of time. He spent most of it on his feet, and a quarter hour (double the length of the half) as well.

It wasn't in any way Diana's fault. He would have been the first to admit that. And if he did not ex-

actly blame her, at least he felt irritated with her; not steadily, but by fits and starts. Sometimes, at the sight of something which reminded him of her loveliness and charm—the mirror on her dressing-table, for instance—an ineffable tenderness came over him, and he drew long, slow breaths.

There were some new books on the drawing-room table and he paused, in his caged prowlings, to examine the titles: "Twinkletoes," "The Idiot," "The Seven That Were Hanged." And when he had looked at the fly-leaves of these books Manners knew that someone whom Diana liked had given them to her, because she had taken the trouble to write her name in them. Would she never come?

The first thing that he had noticed on entering the drawing-room was the photograph of himself in a narrow silver-gilt frame that previously Diana had always kept on her dressing-table.

"First she turns me out of her room," he had thought, "and now she turns my picture out."

But he had gone at once to see if she had not substituted another photograph of him which he knew she liked better. She had not. And he had felt childishly hurt.

He looked at the photograph again, went close to it, and spoke to it. "What's the matter with her anyway?" he asked. The photograph very naturally did not answer. It did not even seem to have heard the question which had been addressed to it. "You've been here all the time," said Manners, "and I've been away. You could tell me an awful lot if you only would. But you won't. I suppose it's because

we have nothing in common except that we look alike."

He heard the hall door open, and a moment later Diana's voice. "Whose bag? Why, for heaven's sake! . . . Frank!"

Somehow he had already gathered that Diana was not alone. And that knowledge damped the ardor of the embrace with which he must otherwise have greeted her.

"Why, Frank!" she said. "How you frightened me!"

They had not really kissed. Their cheeks had touched for a moment, and now she had backed away from him, and although she didn't look in the least frightened she did look a little bewildered and troubled. Then she remembered her companion.

"Ogden," she called, "come and meet my husband . . . of all the surprises!"

A moment later she had introduced to her husband a man named Fenn.

It is doubtful if at that moment he made upon Manners a single distinct impression of any kind. If he seemed anything to Manners he seemed shy, gentle, embarrassed and very much in the way. Ordinarily Manners would have exerted himself to be amusing and polite. But he was really very tired, the waiting had put his nerves on edge, and the manner of his meeting with the woman whom he loved with all his tender heart had been very disappointing —that and the photograph and everything—took from him his usual power of free and easy speech. Diana came to the rescue.

"I don't know what's happened," she said, "or why

you are here. But of course you want to go to the country at once to see Tam, and I suppose of course that you want me to go with you."

"Of course," he said, and turned to Fenn. "I'm awfully sorry to be in the way; but I am and it can't be helped."

Mr. Fenn said something about "only going to the movies," and relapsed at once into a gentle and embarrassed silence. It was obvious that he wanted to get away and that he did not know how. Manners helped him. He thrust out his hand:

"I'm awfully sorry," he said. "It's horrid of me, but I haven't seen my wife and baby for months and months. And I know you'll understand. Awfully glad to have met you."

Mr. Fenn turned somewhat awkwardly toward the door. Diana smiled brightly at him and said: "Sorry, Ogden, 'nother time!"

She seemed to be no more interested in his departure than if he had been the paperhanger, and she turned to her husband, still smiling.

But the smile drooped a little at the corners, and Manners was shocked to observe that Diana really looked as if she might be thirty. His irritation and his disappointment faded before a feeling of pity and compassion. His Diana was tired, and she wasn't looking well, and she wasn't happy, and he couldn't make her happy. He had never seen her look so badly. Even her color was not good.

"You've been overdoing, dear," he said. Usually she would have denied the imputation or shrugged it aside. But she didn't this time. She said: "Shouldn't

wonder." And she added: "How you did frighten me!"

Almost immediately she left him to pack the little bag which served her as a sort of link between what she kept in town and what she left in the country, and Manners, having lit a cigaret, resumed his caged prowlings. In the telling American of it he felt "All in," "Sunk." Diana had not been pleasantly surprised. During his absence he had gained no ground with her. She had been sadder at parting than she was glad at meeting. He wished to ask her at once what was the matter. But he knew that Hilda was with her and that he must wait. It seemed to him that he had had to do almost more waiting in his life than anyone he knew. His had been enforced waitings. He could never during any one of them have had the satisfaction of saying with *Ravenswood* "I bide my time." He bided his times, indeed, but only because he was made to.

Was Diana really beginning to lose her looks? To him that could never make any difference. His love for Diana was not founded upon her looks, nor were the flames of it fanned by them. But to Diana it would be so tragic. With regard to her looks and to the development of her character it had always seemed to him as if for once Time was surely going to stand still. At the station only a few months before she had looked like a young girl. And to-day she looked her age, which was thirty. And of course she knew it. Compassion possessed him and hurt him. He longed to take her in his arms and hold her tight—tight.

He went softly to her bedroom door. But she had not finished packing and Hilda was with her.

"Most finished?" he asked.

"Almost," she said. "We'll have to get some things at the Parlor Market. Do you mind? You see, we weren't either of us expected to-night."

Manners returned to the drawing-room; but this time he had not long to wait. He would not let Hilda help him with the bags, and Diana went ahead to open the doors. He took it for granted that Diana had ordered a taxi. What an able little person she was. There was nothing that she couldn't get done! If only she wouldn't scatter her energy so! How wonderful if she had put it all into building up a home; all her energy, all her ability, all her charm and loveliness!

They were no sooner in the taxi than he took her hand in his, and he held it all the way to the Parlor Market, and thereafter to the Pennsylvania Station. "I'm tired and fussed," he explained, "and it goes right through me and soothes me. If you only *knew* how I love you!"

He felt a faint pressure from her fingers, and she said very quietly and gravely:

"I *do* know, Frank."

In the old wonderful days she would have looked at him with those wonderful blue eyes of hers, eyes that were sometimes gay and imploring at the same moment, and she might have answered:

"If you only knew how I love you!"

"Diana, dear," he said, "there's something on your mind, something that's troubling you."

But she said there was nothing. And he believed her. Having her say definitely that there was nothing was a real relief to him. She qualified her denial.

"It's been a little hard about money," she said. "That Chicago person has never sent the check for his wife's portrait."

"Why, you poor child!" exclaimed Manners, "I supposed of course that you had that."

"I knew how much you had to worry you," said Diana. "And so I just did the best I could without it. But I never knew anything about money before. And you can be sure of one thing. I'm not going to be extravagant any more."

It was the first time that she had ever made a positive promise of reform about anything. Her usual formula was: "Why, I suppose I'll have to try; but I don't suppose I can."

Somehow that promise, though she had phrased it in the form of a mere statement, made him feel as if a barrier was breaking down between them. Now at last she understood that his complaints about her extravagance had not been those of a mean and ill-natured man, but of one who had been sorely tried and harassed. But he merely squeezed her hand and said:

"Then we'll be out of debt in no time."

CHAPTER IV

As the short journey drew toward an end, all Manners's feelings of fatigue and oppression left him. It wouldn't be long now before he would see Tam, and hear her voice, and carry her upward—leaping to his breast, and hold her as tightly as he dared, and his long, wearisome journey would end in at least one meeting of lovers. He became so immersed in anticipation of that happy event that he found difficulty in finding topics for conversation. He asked random questions about things and persons, and his mind made no records of Diana's answers. He would ask her many of those same questions, the next day, when they went for their walk, and she would say "But you asked me that yesterday!" And he would have no recollection of having asked her.

"Who's Fenn?" he asked.

"There were a lot of them when I was little. They went West. And this one has only been in New York a short while. He's very shy."

"I thought he seemed ill-at-ease. But that was natural enough; finding me there *was* awkward."

But Manners at this time was not in the least interested in Fenn.

"Everything all right at the farm?"

"Yes. But McCoy is clamoring for wages. His letters are really outrageous."

"He doesn't mean to be impertinent, and he's really devoted to us. Seen a lot of Mary Hastings?"

"Not very much—somehow."

"Pshaw! I love to have you see her."

A momentary vision of the famous Mrs. Hastings arose before his mind's eye. Her beauty was a real joy to him. He had always proclaimed that she was the most beautiful woman in the world. She was Diana's closest friend; she had a splendid influence on Diana, and it hurt him to think that they had not been seeing very much of each other.

And now the hack which they had hired turned into the short shady driveway that led to their house. And he spoke no more. Before the hack had stopped he was out of it, abandoning Diana and the luggage. He tore open the front door, and rushed into the hall crying: "Tam!—Tam!—Tam!"

And there came a rush of little feet and a shrill voice crying "My Fazzer! My Fazzer!" And then they were in each other's arms, and somehow it could be seen that they were one flesh, one blood, one heart, one soul, and that God had made them for each other.

Neither Diana nor her mother, who had come out of the library where she had been trying to keep Tam quiet, looked at them. For there was a kind of holiness about their rapture which it was not fitting for mortal eyes to behold.

And then he was sitting, and had Tam astride of his knees facing him, and their eyes glistened very brightly with delight. He had demanded that she tell him everything that she had been doing, but

because for her the winter had had but one tremendously important event it was about that that she told him.

"Once," she said, "Muzzer took me to town to spend the night. And Mr. Fenn took us to the Hippodrome, and there was a giant and a dwarve and I stayed up till the *middle* of the night!"

Something of Manners's gladness went right out of him.

"Oh, Diana," he cried, "how *could* you? I'm *so* disappointed."

"Tam was so crazy to go," said Diana. "She talked of nothing else."

"But she can only go to the theater for the first time in her life—once," said Manners, "and I did so want to be there that time. Who," he asked, with the least trace of temper in his voice, "is this Mr. Fenn who comes along and gobbles up my privileges?"

"He's awful nice," said Tam, "'n he can blow wings."

But Manners had forgotten Fenn and the Hippodrome, and his disappointment, and with an "Oh, my *darling!*" he had once more clasped his little daughter to his breast.

Between kissing Tam good-night and dinner-time there was half an hour during which Manners and his mother-in-law sat in front of the library fire and talked about Diana.

At night, at a little distance, Mrs. Langham was still beautiful. Her back was perfectly straight and her small head was splendidly erect. The gray hair hardly showed against the light brown; she was slen-

der and always becomingly dressed. Like Diana, she was extraordinarily neat. Manners had only one fault to find with his mother-in-law; she was almost wilfully inclined to indulge Tam and to spoil her.

"Diana seems to be dead-beat," he said. "I do wish she wasn't so restless."

"It's the vice of her generation," said Mrs. Langham. "You suffer from it yourself, Frank."

"I keep it in bounds, and make it paint pictures."

"If Diana only had something to do. Restlessness is a symptom of idleness. And, like any bad habit, the more it's indulged in the worse it grows."

"She has something on her mind," said Manners. "Have you thought that? Something is troubling her. I've asked her to tell me what it is, but she says there's nothing." He laughed, but not mirthfully. "She'll tell me," he said, "when she gets good and ready, and not before."

Mrs. Langham was devoted to her son-in-law. And all through the troubles that he had had with Diana she had felt herself to be entirely on his side. But she had been very careful not to show this by any word or act. She believed firmly that people who take sides openly, or in any way interfere, as between husband and wife, are more apt to make matters worse than better. She had a sense of justice which even the love of a mother for her daughter could not bias; and, in her judgment, Manners, all things considered, was an excellent husband; while Diana was by no means an excellent wife. During the first years of their marriage she had entertained the highest hopes of Diana. These hopes had diminished until, al-

though still a part of her general maternal faith, they were not untinged with cynicism.

According to her observations very few women made really good wives until they had lost their looks. Their husbands were apt to have more love, then, she thought, and less care.

"You'd hate me," said Manners, "if I took her back to California with me."

"No. But I should decline absolutely to be responsible for Tam in the meanwhile. I have brought up five children of my own, thank you."

"I sometimes wish." said Manners, "that once in a while you had corrected one of your children with a rod."

"Poor Mr. Langham and I told you at the time that you were marrying a handful."

A smile of great sweetness stole over Manners's face. He rose and stood with his back to the fire, still smiling.

"And good Lord," he said. "how I still love her!"

It was at this moment that Diana appeared in the doorway. She had had a hot bath and looked refreshed. Whether she had color or not made a great difference in Diana's looks. How bright and crisp her dark-brown hair was, and how charmingly she carried her head.

"I think dinner's ready," she said.

"If it is," said her husband, "then one thing is as sure as anything can be: I am going to dine with two extremely pretty women."

He had an arm for each of them and he hurried them, laughing and protesting, to the dining-room.

Diana had very little to say. She announced, however, that she was dead-tired and that she was going to bed right after dinner. Manners glanced at that bright brown head, and wondered for the hundredth time that day just what particular troubling thought it contained. If he had known his heart would have stood still.

Diana looked calm and serene. What would Manners have thought if she had yielded to the impulse which was urging her to leap to her feet, to throw down the candlesticks, to smash glasses and to scream: "For God's sake, let me go! I want to die! I want to die!"

Dinner was short, but although Manners and Mrs. Langham kept up an energetic conversation, it passed slowly. Calm and serene though she seemed, Diana could not altogether deceive her mother and her husband; and she, equally versed in their moods and habits of mind, knew their talk and laughter for the pretense they were.

"The quicker I leave these young things together," thought Mrs. Langham, "to blow the clouds away or kiss them away, the better."

And shortly after dinner she wished them good-night upon a plea of letter-writing, and ascended to her room, humming gaily as she went. But there was no gaiety in her; neither did she write any letters. For a long time now she had felt that she was living over a volcano. She could only hide this feeling from others. Alone in her own room the corners of her handsome, courageous mouth drooped. And it was an old woman who that night lay down at twelve

o'clock in her narrow bed, and slept no wink till after four.

"And I'm going up too," said Diana, almost immediately after the sound had come to them of Mrs. Langham's door closing. "I suppose you'll be stopping in to say good-night to me?'

She met his look bravely, and even waved to him from the stair. He could not know that when she had closed the door of her room she dropped on her knees by the bed, and began to sob like a broken-hearted child.

There was still so much of the child in Diana that she cried all the time she was undressing and looping up her hair for the night, and after she had washed her face with cold water she cried some more, and had to wash it again. From her prayers she rose, not with placidity and resignation in her face, but with resentment. Of the short-lived look of refreshedness that had followed her hot bath there was no longer any trace. There were dark circles under her eyes, and she looked haggard.

Her husband came to her presently in his pajamas and a long wrapper of white toweling. He seated himself on the edge of the bed and took both her hands in his. He looked into her eyes a long time, and it seemed to him that in their blue depths he could detect fear and animosity. The beating of his heart became less emphatic.

"Diana, dear," he said, "you *are* fond of me, aren't you?"

"I don't think you know how fond of you I am," she said.

He leaned over her and slid his left arm under her shoulders. In his right hand he still held both hers.

"Diana, darling," he said, "doesn't it make any difference that I love you with my whole heart and soul?"

"It makes a lot of difference, Frank."

He loosed her hands and took her altogether into his arms. His face dropped to hers, but she turned hers away, so that it was her cheek that he kissed, and in the same instant of time he knew that she had begun to cry.

Francis Manners had his great moments, and the passion that shook him turned, as at the touch of a magician's wand, into pity and chivalry. He rubbed his cheek against hers, and almost in his natural voice he said:

"I know how tired you are, darling. I'm only saying good-night."

He lowered his arms from about her, and rose once more to a sitting position. Diana neither looked nor spoke her gratitude. She never did. In certain ways the grave itself could be no more reluctant to disclose its secrets than Diana. As a matter of fact she was so grateful to her husband that she dared not speak about it. He smiled upon her so sweetly that his smile had in it something of the angelic. And her heart, at once wayward and compassionate, was tortured with remorse.

Soon after he had left her she fell into the sleep that follows mental exhaustion. Her last thoughts

were of the many great hurts she had done her husband. And before sleeping she, whom he had never suspected of making a resolution of any kind, made many noble and wonderful resolutions, all with his happiness in view, and believed that this time she would keep them.

In moments of dejection Manners believed that for his wife such words as "compassion, mercy, pity, self-sacrifice, justice" had no meaning whatever, when the truth was that they held for her so much meaning that her repeated failures to be compassionate, merciful, pitiful, self-sacrificing and just tormented her. It was a pity that Diana was so inarticulate. Her husband thought that he knew her like a book. He did not know her at all.

Some such moment of dejection was upon Manners now. His chivalrous mood had been succeeded by one of discouragement and self-pity, and the man whose last smile had had in it something of the angelic looked now extremely human and cross. "That was no way for a wife to welcome a husband when he'd been away for months and months!" "Wouldn't you think she'd want to make up to me for all the hurts she's given me?" "Damn all this modern restlessness, and all this business about people who ought to be one feeling that they must live their own sacred, selfish, separate lives in their own way." With such thoughts he worked himself into a rage. The blood got into his head and he could not sleep. "I've loved her for twenty years," he thought. "I've been faithful. I've supported her, and worked my hands off for her, and it means nothing to her. Nothing!"

It was a pity that he could not have known that that very love of his, which she did actually at times seem to hold in such small esteem, had more than once waved her back from the brink of a precipice toward which she was rushing.

CHAPTER V

DIANA had her breakfast in bed and sewed during most of the morning. At such times her room was the clearing-house for all family affairs and for her own personal ones. Either the door was open and she was interviewing the cook or the waitress; or the door was shut and she was telephoning with friends in the city. Manners came and went, but as Tam was nearly always at his heels there were no opportunities for really intimate conversation.

He had waked more sure than ever that something specific was troubling Diana; and the anger that he had felt against her was all gone. She didn't look well, even after her long sleep, and she didn't look happy, and he couldn't keep his mind off her health and her happiness.

Tam was a real nuisance that morning, for her father's heart was not in the business of playing and romping. But he did not wish her to know this, and he forced a gaiety which deceived no one but Tam. By noon his nerves had been brought to a fine edge, and it was not till then that he had a few minutes alone with Diana. As on the preceding night he seated himself on the edge of her bed, and contemplated her for quite a long time without speaking. Diana made a great many of her own clothes, and at the moment her eyes were busy with the shirtwaist which she had

begun that morning, so that their expression was hidden from her husband.

"I think you might put that thing down and talk to me," he said.

It will be remembered that Diana had gone to sleep with her mind filled with good resolutions. She put down her work obediently, and with real sweetness of expression looked up to meet her husband's eyes. *This* time, cost what it might—yea, though she broke her heart—she was going to keep those good resolutions, every one of them. He should perhaps have kissed her, told her not to be late for lunch, and left her. But this is doubtful. Her nerves were on edge, too. Perhaps it did not matter much what he said or did.

"I want to know what's wrong, Diana."

Her expression lost its sweetness instantly.

"Why should anything be wrong?"

"I'm sure I don't know; but I should like to, and also what it is."

She shrugged her shoulders, and she knew that if she was going to keep some of her good resolutions she would have to break others.

"It isn't right for you to keep anything from me," he said.

"Oh, Frank," she exclaimed, "don't talk about right and duty. Did I ever do anything right because it was right? If I ever do do right it's because I want to."

"You tell me there is nothing wrong," said Manners, "but I know you much too well to believe that. On the whole you are the most truthful person I know, so that on the few occasions when you have attempted to deceive you have made a perfect botch of it."

Diana couldn't help smiling at this description of herself. It was perfectly accurate.

"So I know there's something," he went on, "but I can't be sure that you are ever going to tell me what it is. Won't you please tell me, dear? Maybe I could do something to help?"

"There *isn't* anything," she said. And he knew that she was not telling the truth.

"Have it your own way!" he exclaimed, with some temper. "But you ought to remember that the things I imagine will be a good deal worse than what you could tell me, if you only would, and show a little consideration."

"Frank," she said, "I *have* some things to tell you, and I think you'll be pleased. But it's time for me to dress, and I'm not going to tell you now."

"All right, dear. Can I stay and watch you dress?"

"I *wish* you wouldn't, Frank. It makes me nervous."

He sighed and went out obediently. There had been a time when if in the course of twenty-four hours he had not seen Diana in all stages of dress and undress, she would have felt slighted. The best picture he had ever painted had been of Diana without any clothes on at all. He had painted it for the sheer love of painting it. And then he had destroyed it.

But it was good to know that the things which she was going to tell him would please him. And his imagination began to feed on this promise, leaping from small things to great, until his breast was filled with hopes of an exceeding rosiness.

He had always believed that she had a splendid

character, and that some time it would triumph over all her faults and failures. Perhaps even now that bright hour was at hand.

The frost had begun to come out of the ground and so they kept to the macadamed roads. Diana had already told him very briefly, almost sulkily, that she had made up her mind to give more of her time to Tam, and to be economical. But she did not say that in all other ways she had resolved to make him a better wife. Her resolutions, indeed, were all going to pieces under the pressure of continuous introspection, and, of course, Manners, whose hopes had been so rosy, was disappointed.

"I wish you could say," he said, "that you were going to live my life—our life—a little more. You are away from me so much with people I hardly know, and whom I don't care two straws about. It hurts me like the devil."

"I thought we'd settled all that years ago."

"If doing things I beg you not to do is settling them, why then we did—years ago."

They covered several hundred yards without speaking.

"Suppose, for instance," said Manners, "you came back from a journey, and went to the apartment to wait for me, and I burst in on you with a perfectly strange lady. You wouldn't like it. Even though you don't love me, you wouldn't like it. But it's all right for you to burst in on me with a strange man in tow. And I'm supposed to take it as a matter of course. But I don't—inside."

"Nowadays," said Diana, "every woman has her own friends."

"Things might have been better for us," he hinted darkly, "if you hadn't insisted on having yours."

And he had one of those sharp pangs of jealousy which still tormented him at times, though the original cause of them had long ceased to exist.

"You rode deliberately for the first tumble," he said, "and ever since you've been riding for another. And when you get it you'll say that it just happened and nobody could help it, and I'll have to be contented with that. It's fine that you are going to look after Tam better, and be economical; but why not turn the new leaf all the way over? Live *our* life, Diana, and be a real wife to me!"

All that he had said seemed to pass from Diana like water from a duck's back. And she made no comment. Manners, who in all justice had long been sorely tried by her stubbornness and independence, began to lose his temper.

"Good Lord!" he exclaimed, "why don't you divorce me, and then you could go your own way, lamented of course, but uncriticized!"

It was not the first time that in a crackle of temper he had made some such suggestion to her; only to be brought short up with an "Oh, don't be silly!" But on the present occasion Diana startled him by saying: "And if I did—would you let me have Tam?"

"I've loved you," he said quickly. "I've been faithful to you, I've taken care of you; now, just because you are restless and bored with your lot, you think you'd like to divorce me, and have Tam too. You

as much as declare in one breath that you are no good and that you are fit to bring up a child. If you didn't manage to hurt me so like the devil, Diana, I could put back my head and laugh."

Diana said nothing and they walked on and on.

"Diana," there was no temper in his voice now, only a developing fear, "you don't really mean that you'd like to be free, and take Tam away from me?"

"You said I couldn't have Tam."

"Most certainly you can't, unless your reasons for getting rid of me are better than I think them."

He glanced sideways and observed to his horror that although she walked bravely along with her head in the air, her mouth was all puckered, and slow tears were running out of her eyes. Upon the strength of that sight he was able to change his whole voice and manner.

"March around New York certainly does beat the Dutch!" he exclaimed. "There isn't a darn thing to do; no golf, no tennis, no people, no nothing. If I only had the money I'd grab you and Tam by the scruffs of your necks and carry you back to California with me."

But his heart was leaping with a wild alarm. "There *is* something wrong," he kept thinking, "something terribly wrong."

"March is almost nice in California," he went on, "and April is wonderful."

Still struggling against her tears, but in a matter-of-fact voice, Diana asked him when he had to go back. And he told her that he had to go back at once, and that indeed he ought not to have come away at all.

"I've finished the whole bally room," he said, "except one end. I can't get even the sketch for that to suit me."

"Couldn't you do it here?" He shook his head.

"It has things in it that don't even grow around here," he explained. "No. It's got to be done on the spot. And of course poor Mrs. Appleyard is in a dreadful hurry."

"Is she nice?"

"Y-e-e-s. But she looks like Ellen Terry, and knows it."

CHAPTER VI

NEXT day Diana went to town by an early train. Manners could not believe that the shopping of which she made an excuse could be very urgent; and the prospect of passing one whole day of his short visit without her depressed him extremely. "She's as cool about it," he thought, "as if I were a permanency." But he made no effort to dissuade her, and kissed her good-by with a good heart.

And indeed most of the day passed pleasantly enough for him. March had come in, soft and gentle as a lamb. Here and there in sunny angles his sharp eyes detected fine and tender young blades of green grass. It was a hopeful day. It made him feel as if he could find within him, without too much searching, the strength and ambition to begin life over again. It was one of those days when, even in the teeth of logic and experience, his wish is the father of a man's thought.

And his thoughts, during the earlier hours of the day, fashioned a future that was rosy and contented. He believed that out of the curious harassed phase through which Diana was passing her real character would emerge. A miracle was not needed. It was only necessary that during one crumb of time she should see herself as others saw her.

But the day was not entirely devoted to thinking and wishing. Mrs. Langham and Tam, in whom the

home instinct was as strong as it was in Manners himself, had spent most of their winter improving the rented premises and establishing those interesting accessories which grew up about an owned home. In November they had planted dwarf fruit-trees; eight in all. There were two varieties each of apple, pear, peach, and cherry. And the nurseryman had promised them fruit in the first season. About the roots of these adorable little trees Tam had stamped the earth her own self.

"You never know how long you are going to live in a rented house," Mrs. Langham thus explained her extravagance; for the trees had cost two dollars and a half apiece. "And if we should stay here several years they will make the place so much more interesting."

"Just as soon as the fruit begins to form," said Manners, "the trees ought to be covered with mosquito netting or something to keep the birds off. If we could only get some very fine-meshed fish-nets like I've seen in Scotch gardens! They're tarred, and so they last practically forever."

In November they had also planted and caused to be planted in the grass some thousands of mixed bulbs. How many hundreds of these Tam had placed her own self in the holes which the gardener had made it would be impossible to say. By way of being neighborly they dug up one bulb to see how it was getting on, and behold it was already well rooted, and from its distended and bursting crown a rigid spike of white, deepening into pale green at the point, was thrusting vigorously upward.

"Isn't spring wonderful?" exclaimed Manners. "Isn't it wonderful! Everything that's cold and discouraged takes heart and starts for the light. Did you know, Tam, that sometimes the grass grows so fast that you can hear it?"

"Have you heard it, Fazzer?"

"Never. But so many people say they have that I believe it's true. Maybe Grandma has?"

No, but Grandma's father had. He had been extraordinarily intimate with Nature. Grandma had once seen him her own self standing bareheaded and barehanded on the tiptop of a stepladder, and scooping masses of swarmed wild bees from a lower limb of the big black walnut that had grown in front of their house and putting them into a hive. Even spiders wouldn't bite him. When he was sick he made his own medicines out of different kinds of plants that he found in the fields and woods.

"And," said Tam, without realizing that she was gilding the nature-lovingness of this much-discussed and almost mythological ancestor, "he had sixteen children."

"Now let's show your father the chickens," said Mrs. Langham.

As she led the way to where a practical chicken-coop had been improvised from an old dog-kennel, Manners found himself admiring for the thousandth time the light, alert walk of his mother-in-law. Very easily she might have been mistaken at a little distance for Diana. The chicken-run contained five White Leghorn hens and their proud husband. They were quite tame and evidently expected to be fed.

Tam, although she winced, and flew other signals of nervousness, let them peck the palm of her hand. And it made Manners very proud to think that his little daughter was not a cry-baby.

A real carpenter had made the dog-kennel what it was; but he had had plenty of amateur assistance. Tam had done most of the whitewashing; and the posts for the chicken-wire had been driven by Mr. Fenn.

The day had been almost altogether pleasant up to the mentioning of Mr. Fenn's name, which seemed, at this third or fourth casual mention of it since Manners's return, to take on a certain importance. And he had now to force an expression of that natural interest which he took in everything that interested Tam. It was an automatic and uninterested palm which he offered to the hungry beaks of Tam's poetry.

"And what," he asked lightly, "was Mr. Fenn doing out here?"

And with equal lightness Mrs. Langham answered: "We've had him over a number of week-ends. He's a great friend of Diana's."

"So it would seem," said Manners. Half-kneeling he continued to offer his palm to the chickens; for every time it was pecked Tam squealed with delight. Mrs. Manners looked down on the pair and there came into her eyes an expression in which a kindly cynicism seemed to be mixed with compassion.

Manners was thinking to himself: "It *couldn't* be. He's so timid looking."

Wipe a damp slate lightly with a wet sponge and

instantly the marks of the slate-pencil seem to disappear. But as the wet dries, unless the wiping has been thorough, the marks reappear. It would be so with the attempt which Manners now made to erase all thoughts of Fenn from his mind.

In the afternoon, having made a rendezvous with Tam for teatime, he stretched his legs swiftly over many miles of road. Exercise, he believed, after the wearisome train journey, was all that he needed to get the blood out of his brain and put his mind into a healthy condition. And for a few miles his belief was justified. Nothing could be troubling Diana especially, therefore nothing was troubling her. She was merely in tune with the season; the keen, brisk New York winter was over. If there was still a great spread of gaiety it had begun to taste stale to the banqueters. Spring, real spring, was still a long way off. All that Diana needed was golf, tennis and riding. Subconsciously she was waiting until the frost should be out of the ground, the footing sound, and the trees misted with green. With the first spring flowers Diana herself would bloom again.

His next home-coming would be very different. The Hempstead plains would be flooded with violets. The spring would be in Diana's thoughts and in her blood perhaps.

The next time he would telegraph that he was coming. It had been a mistake this time to spare her anxiety for his safety. It is good for wives to be a little anxious now and then—not *too* anxious, but a little. He didn't propose to have a perfect stranger present to spoil that next meeting with Diana. The

next time his quick eyes proposed to themselves to recognize her pansy-like face from afar, as he came hurrying up the platform to the iron gate outside which she would be waiting.

He would have finished his commission, the final payment would be on deposit. This time they could pay all their debts, every single last one of them, and if Diana wished they could afford Newport for six weeks or two months. It would be strange if he did not pick up a handful of orders to paint portraits. Seeing how happy it made him to be out of debt, Diana would see to it that they never fell into debt again. He would take his work more seriously; he wouldn't play quite as hard. He would play a certain amount of golf, of course, but he would never again lie awake at night thinking how to get a ball into a hole in the fewest number of shots. If he must sleep badly he would at least turn the discomfort of it into profit. He would think about his work. Lack of thought was all that was really wrong with his work. It had charm, so all men said, at least, and a preposterous facility; but it lacked guts.

He drew to one side to give free passage to an overtaking car, and heard himself loudly and joyously hailed by name. The two men who occupied the tonneau had turned and were waving to him. The car had begun to slow down and presently stopped. Harry Crowninshield, followed more slowly by the other man, jumped out and came running back to meet him.

"What are you doing here?" he roared. "Diana told me only the other day you were glued to 'Frisco!

You know Tevis?" His surmise was correct, for Manners and Tevis had once been famous rivals, and time was when each of them fancied that he knew the other only too well. Crowninshield, remembering this suddenly, felt that he had been a little stupid, and attempted to pass it off by roaring, "And how is Diana?"

The younger men both laughed, for they had long since compounded their difficulties, and Manners answered that Diana was fine.

"Glad to see you back? I'll bet she wasn't!"

"How much?" asked Manners, the laugh still on his mouth.

"I won't name any sum; but don't ever forget what the mice do when the cat's away. And if they seem to look glad when the cat comes back, why, believe me, it's all crocodile stuff."

It is probable that Crowninshield only meant to be amusing. But somehow Manners's heart seemed to contract, and he was glad when the two men had climbed back into their car and left him to his thoughts, though from these the rosiness was already departing. It really had been awkward and disagreeable when Diana had come into the apartment with that man Fenn in tow.

Manners had a pair of eyes which lost very few tricks of appearance; but of Fenn's appearance they had made hardly any records whatever. "If we met face to face," thought Manners, "I should not know who he was; very likely I'd think that I had never even seen him before."

He had turned and was walking back toward that rented house, which for want of a more accurate term

he called Home, but the jubilance had gone out of his feet. Was Diana's true character ever going to come out after all? Was he not probably wrong about her having a hidden character? Was it not more likely that to the very end she would remain impulsively helpful and impulsively troublesome?

The darker passages in their married life crowded into his memory. It was in his power almost to re-live those awful moments in which he had learned from her own lips that she no longer loved him; and those moments still more awful when weeks later she had told him that she loved another man.

The spring warmth had gone out of the day and a gusty wind had risen and was beginning to blow from the northwest. It was five o'clock when he reached his house and learned that Diana had telephoned, and wanted him to call her up at the apartment.

Manners was bitterly disappointed. He had expected to find Diana waiting for him at the house. She had hinted that she would probably come out by an early train. And now it was five o'clock, and she had not even started. "Oh," he thought, seating himself at the telephone in the coat-room, "she ought not to treat me like this."

But for a moment he was mollified by the mere sound of her voice. It was so calm and natural. She asked if he was all right, and if Tam was all right.

"Fine," he said. "When are you coming out?"

"That's what I wanted to speak to you about. I seem to be dog-tired, and I wondered if you'd mind awfully if I spent the night in town?"

He did not answer at once; but drew a long sharp

breath. It was as if he had suddenly been immersed in cold water. Then he said, with irritation:

"Go ahead. Suit yourself. I suppose you realize that I came home principally to see you, and that I'm only on for a few days." Diana's voice remained perfectly calm.

"You'd rather I came out?"

"Rather? Of course I'd rather. But of course if you are really too tired . . ."

"All right. I can catch the five-forty."

It had been an easy victory. And he thought no longer of his own disappointment, but of Diana's.

"Don't do that!" he urged affectionately. "I was disappointed—awfully—at the thought of not seeing you till to-morrow; but that was pure selfishness. By all means stay in town and rest up."

But Diana refused. She hadn't supposed that it mattered one way or the other. She would come out by the five-forty. She was perfectly definite.

"Well," said Manners, "if you're not really too tired, I think that's best."

Until the time of Diana's arrival he played with Tam; but only half-heartedly. He felt that he had been unjust to Diana, and he hated injustice. He had only to look at her to know that she was tired, and yet, because she proposed to rest, he had been angry, and was dragging her out to the country in the train that was always crowded and stuffy. And of course, she couldn't help feeling that he had been unjust to her and resenting it. The prospects of some affectionate hours together were not good.

And indeed when she arrived Diana's face showed

that she was not pleased with what she had been made (oh, yes, he had *made* her) to do. And Manners heartily wished that he had not shown irritation at her suggestion of spending the night in town; for if she was too tired to talk, and if she was going to have her dinner in bed, and try to get to sleep right afterward, his irritation had gained him nothing. On the contrary it had caused him a temporary fall of some distance in Diana's good graces; and his only satisfaction would be in knowing that she was somewhere under the same roof with him.

CHAPTER VII

DIANA sat in the hall for a few minutes before going upstairs. Perhaps she wished to show him that she was too tired to go a step farther. But it is more likely that the nearest chair with a cushion influenced her and nothing else. Tam wished to climb upon her, and Diana would not have it; but she put an arm around the child and squeezed her affectionately to her side.

"You're really all in, aren't you?" said Manners. "It was *so* thoughtless of me to urge you to come out. I can't tell you how sorry I am."

"I don't believe it matters much one way or the other," said Diana, but a certain curt quality in her voice indicated that it had mattered a good deal.

"What have you and Tam been doing with yourselves?" she asked. But the question and the sudden charming smile that went with it were Tam alone.

"Well, we went all over the improvements with Grandma," said Manners, "and we played some very violent games; and after lunch father went for a long walk, and when he came back we played more games, only very quiet ones. And then you came. And you? See any body interesting in town?"

"A good many people I know; but I don't think that you would describe any of them as particularly interesting."

She rose with a distinct effort.

"My legs feel like lead," she said. But in climbing the short flight of stairs to the upper hall she did not lean against the arm which Manners had put around her waist. It was almost, he felt keenly, as if she didn't want him to touch her. At the door of her room she turned.

"You don't really mind about dinner, do you?" she asked. "I'm dead to the world."

"I don't see why you should be so tired, Diana."

The pain that he felt showed in his eyes, and Diana relented toward him.

"Come and talk to me after dinner," she said. "I won't be half so tired then."

It was a placid talk, during which Diana, who had been reading a book when he joined her, was at no pains to disguise the fact that she was very sleepy. She yawned a number of times, laughed, and said that she was sorry but that she really couldn't help herself. He tried to interest her in the idea of a Newport summer and suggested that she take up the question of renting a cottage; but for once in her life Diana seemed to be rather down on Newport. It was a life that led nowhere; it was frightfully expensive; she had lost her enthusiasm for late hours and dancing.

Secretly, Manners was very much pleased. He had always hoped that she would one day tire of gaiety and extravagance, and of all other false values. He said that he was pleased, and even grateful.

"But you've no reason to be grateful," said Diana. "I've changed a lot since you went away; that's all. I didn't try to change. It just happened; so there's no occasion for gratitude. I can no more help being

tired of parties than I could help being crazy about them."

"Well, then," he smiled, "I'll try very hard not to feel grateful. But you don't mind if I feel glad, do you? It looks to me as if you were coming across, as if you'd made up your mind to live our life instead of just yours. Even if you don't love me, we've got an awful lot to fall back on, to look back on, haven't we?"

She nodded, but did not answer.

"You don't really believe that I fell in love with you when you were only a little shaver, do you?"

"Yes, I do, Frank," she said, quickly. "I know how long you've loved me and how much."

"It ought to count. It ought to make life together easier for you."

"It's the only thing that makes life together possible. You think that I always do just as I please; and that I have no consideration for your wishes; but you don't know how often and often I've given up things to please you; and how if it weren't for you I might not be any good at all—if I *am* any good."

He knelt by the bed, and took her in his arms and laid his cheek against hers. And it seemed for once as if she was glad to have his arms about her; but though he held his breath and listened he could detect no quickening in the action of her heart. Her gladness was that of a child who, after much traipsing and disillusionment, has found a safe refuge.

"From now on," he said, "things will be better with us. You are going to be patient and kind, not by fits and starts, but all the time."

He felt her shoulders quiver. He drew back his

head to look at her, and very swiftly she turned her face away. She had begun to cry. He clasped her very tightly.

"Oh, Diana, darling, what *does* ail you? Tell your best friend. Tell poor old Frank who's loved you so long and so faithfully. I know there's something. *Please* tell me."

But she only cried the harder, and he drew back and rose to his feet, his heart numb with a sense of catastrophe.

"Diana," he said, "for heaven's sake tell me what is wrong! I know you too well to believe you when you say there is nothing. This isn't the first time you've acted like this. . . . For God's sake, dear, tell me what is wrong!"

"Won't you please leave me alone?" she said. "There's nothing wrong—nothing. I'm just tired to death, and the least thing makes me cry. . . ."

"There is nothing specifically wrong?" A note of sternness had come into his voice.

"There's *nothing*. And, Frank, I'll be different to-morrow. I'll—I'll do anything you want to-morrow —anything. I'm just so tired." Once more his voice was all gentleness.

"Then get to sleep as quick as ever you can, dear." He leaned over swiftly and kissed her. "And sleep late."

He put out the lights in her room and closed the door after him.

He found his mother-in-law reading the evening papers in the library. She was in a cool and restful mood, and merely the casual, natural and good-natured

tones of her voice soothed him, so that it was easily and with a smile that he said:

"I'm really worried about Diana. She cries at the least thing. First she says that she's a reformed character, that she's going to be at home more, that she's going to be economical, that she's sick of gaiety; and then, instead of acting the happiness that reformed characters are supposed to feel, she cries."

"It's nothing but nerves," said Mrs. Langham. "Men never seem to understand that crying is not painful to a woman, but one of her greatest luxuries. When a man's nerves get on edge, there's really nothing he can do. But a woman can always cry. We like to cry. Diana has probably made up her mind to turn over a new leaf; she knows that it is going to be very hard for her to do that, and so she cries."

"But she says it isn't a decision. She says she has simply changed and that she deserves no credit."

"It doesn't matter a bit," said Mrs. Langham, "how the change came about, if only she sticks to it. Life will be very much more peaceful for all of us. . . ."

"Excuse me!" said Manners, suddenly. "I thought I heard her voice."

He stepped quickly into the hall, and listened. He could hear her voice distinctly now, and it sounded cheerful. She was talking with someone on the telephone that stood at the head of her bed.

He ran quickly up the stair; but by the time he had knocked on the door she had finished telephoning and hung up the receiver. In her face there was no trace of recent tears. There was color in her cheeks, and her eyes looked very bright and shining.

"I heard your voice," said Manners, "and came up to see if there was anything the matter."

"It was Ogden Fenn," she said, "to ask how I felt. I saw him in town, and he said I looked so tired it worried him."

"His inquiries seem to have had a good effect," said Manners, a little dryly, "for you look quite like yourself again. Now do leave that receiver off, so nobody else can disturb you, and go to sleep."

The alacrity with which she obeyed pleased him. And he went downstairs with good hopes for the morrow. But it annoyed him to think that another man's solicitude should afford her the pleasure which his own had been unable to supply.

Her thought that on the morrow she would be different, that she would refuse him nothing, was the happy thought upon which Manners fell asleep that night. And all the next morning it was never far from his mind. It was a rejuvenating thought; and brought him with a high spirit into whatever plans Tam had conceived for her own amusement.

Diana's long-hoped for reform was by way of being accomplished. The resolution seemed to have cost her dear; but she had made it, and it was actually to go into effect. With Tam in tow, he was in and out of her room a dozen times during the morning, interrupting; but always upon some pleasant and laughing excuse, her housekeeping, her sewing, her note-writing, and her telephoning.

After luncheon, for the day had turned exceedingly pleasant, they went for a long walk, and for the first time since his return Diana showed a desire to hear

about his work and his California experiences. Since these latter had contained much that was odd and delightful, he did his best to be entertaining; to interest Diana and to make her laugh. "It's the best walk and talk," he told himself, "that we've had together in ever so long. Even if she doesn't love me, she *is* fond of me, and I don't bore her."

It was not until they were half-way home that the conversation took a more serious turn. Manners told her that, through his association with Californians, so many of whom were Roman Catholics, he had come to be a firm believer in confession.

"I've often thought that I'd like to confess," said Diana, "but only to a professional confessor; somebody who'd forget all about me as he turned away to take on the next sinner. But it must take a lot of practice before you can confess properly. I'm sure that I'd be always trying to put my case in the best possible light."

"If you were going to confess," Manners laughed, "I'd like to substitute for the priest. I'd give anything I own, short of you and Tam, to know how your mind works, and what you really think is wrong and what you really think is right."

They were nearing home and a silence had fallen between them. Manners had determined even before the walk started to touch on certain matters germane to the new leaf which Diana seemed to be turning, but the lack of any opening which should cause his doing so to seem unforced had kept him hesitating, and it seemed that he must either let the occasion pass

or make an abrupt plunge. He chose the latter alternative.

"Diana," he said, with an unsuccessful effort to make his voice sound casual, "I hope you are really going to come all the way this time."

Diana said that she didn't know just what he meant.

"Well," he explained, "you've hinted that things are going to be different. You've said definitely that you are going to take better care of Tam, and that you are going to be economical. And of course that's all very much to the good; but there are other things which you haven't touched on at all. I'd love to hear you say that you are going to be a real wife to me again, and that you are going to live our life—Tam's and yours and mine—instead of just yours."

"What do you mean by being a real wife?"

"You know as well as I do."

This was an uncomfortable topic for them both.

"You know," said Diana, in a small, set voice, "that I don't feel about you the way you feel about me, and so I shouldn't think you'd want me to have children. It's bad enough when both people love each other."

"I don't see why you should be so much more fastidious than hundreds of women who've had the same sort of education and bringing up. And I don't believe it's because you are hyperfastidious or because you don't love me. I believe it's because you hate to be bothered for a long time about any one particular thing. If it didn't take more than twenty-four hours, and if it didn't hurt, you wouldn't object to having more children. Some day you'll realize that there's

just one highroad to happiness, and that's — doing right."

They walked on in silence, and turned in at their gate.

"You said yesterday," Manners broke in abruptly, "that to-day things would be different; that you'd do anything I asked you. You didn't mean that?"

"I meant," said Diana, in the same set voice, "that I'd made up my mind to do what seems an awful lot to me."

He looked sideways at her and perceived that her expression was quite stony. And he realized that as usual, when their minds were in actual contact, she had succeeded in making him feel that she, and not he, was the aggrieved one.

"Well, dear," he said with resignation, "do the best you can."

He had intended to bring up also the matter of Diana's friendships with people who were not his friends. But he postponed that. The moment did not seem propitious.

Diana reclined luxuriously. She had bathed, and she was resting until it should be time to dress for dinner. A chair stood beside her lounge, and a book lay face down on it. She looked serene and comfortable.

Nou Nou, the old nurse, whose real name was Mrs. Lawson, could be heard shrilly hunting for Tam. It was time for a dirty little face and two dirty little hands to be made clean and shining for supper. Tam who, like her mother, objected to being on time for anything, was hiding. Diana listened to the hunt and

smiled. She had made certain resolutions which seemed to her beautiful and self-sacrificing. She was going to be a better wife to Frank—no children, of course; though he should almost have his will with her now and then. She would take far, far better care of Tam; she would be truly economical. She would never be out of sorts or sulky any more in this difficult and sometimes repulsive course, she would be sustained by that exalted, beautiful and spiritual thing which had come into her life. Of course she could never be really happy; but she would be sustained in all the sacrifices that she was going to make.

She smiled almost happily at her husband when he pushed open the door which separated her room from his. He had come, he said, to apologize for having been cross; but somehow the fact of her having friends who were not his friends always rankled. And it troubled him and frightened him too; because it was just that which had led them into their first great difficulties.

He spoke very gently, as if he was reasoning with a child. She moved a little so that he could sit on the edge of the lounge.

"You're so young and charming," he said, "that you can't help inviting trouble. That's what frightens me so. I couldn't go through another time like the other. I just couldn't—couldn't. Couldn't you promise me not to play round with people I disapprove of—especially men? It doesn't make me exactly jealous, but I have the feeling all the time that you are playing with fire, and that you are going to get burnt."

The soft smiling light that had been in Diana's eyes was dying.

"You ought not to have *any* men come to the apartment when I'm not there; but most especially men that aren't friends of mine, too, and whom I don't like or trust. You can't imagine your own mother doing that sort of thing when she was your age."

"The times are so different, Frank. But you stay old-fashioned. Why, every married woman I know has her own particular friends, and feels perfectly free to see them when she likes. Please don't let's get into an argument about that. What would my friends think if I suddenly dropped them?"

"They wouldn't feel half as badly as I did, dear" said Manners, "when you suddenly dropped me."

"Oh, Frank! Can't you ever forget that? I wasn't really grown up. And it was just a brainstorm, anyway."

"You remove a man from Paradise, put him in Purgatory, keep him there—and think he ought to forget all about it! . . . You've never even said that you were sorry, or that you regretted the lost Paradise that we used to live in. You've never even asked me to forgive you for hurting me so. You never offered any reparation. All you did was to forget What's-his-name very promptly, and to discover that you had a life of your own to lead, a dangerous, unsettled life, and to proceed to lead it. Naturally I'm afraid of repetition."

"O Lord," said Diana, "I thought we had everything satisfactorily settled, but it seems not."

"There was a man," said Manners, "whom you

have forgotten, but I shall always hate him. And now because I am afraid that there will be another man whom you will forget, but whom I shall always have to hate, you consider me unreasonable and old-fashioned. A cat that has once sat on a hot stove sits on no more stoves, whether they're hot or cold. Perhaps you have a right to live your own life, Diana. God only knows. But surely you have no right to make your own husband, who has loved you since you were a little child, and been faithful to you in word and deed—surely you haven't the right to make him live in fear."

"You are always talking about your wonderful love for me, Frank; but sometimes it seems as if you did nothing but scold me and reproach me. . . . Just now I thought you were coming to make love to me; but instead you just say things to me that make me feel cold and resentful."

It is true that he had come with love-making in his heart; and passion. But though desire still coursed hotly in his veins, he knew very well that the moment in which he might have hoped to wake a reciprocal desire had passed. And somehow Diana knew that he knew this.

"Diana," he said presently, "it's been a devilish hard resolution to make; but I've succeeded after many attempts. For Tam's sake, and of course for my own, I want people to think that you are my faithful and affectionate wife; but inside this house you shall be free as air. I shall ask nothing of you but common politeness, you may lock the door between our rooms, and you need never turn the key again as long as you

live. You've taken your love away from me; you've taken the home I wanted away from me; you've taken the son I wanted away from me. And I surrender. On every point but one I throw up my hands. You are not to have friends that aren't my friends. You are not to behave as if you were not married. I'm giving up practically everything; and it's only fair that you should give up a little something too."

"I should think you could trust me," she said hotly, "not to do anything that your wife shouldn't do."

"I did. And you got yourself thoroughly talked about, and you crucified me. Long before you got infatuated with What's-his-name, I begged you to stop seeing so much of him. But you would go your own way. You knew best. You still know best; experience teaches you nothing. And you still insist on going your own way, which leads to inevitable hell for you, and to a deepening of the purgatory in which, for no fault of my own—so help me God, for no fault of my own!—you force me to live."

He rose abruptly, and hurried to the door, almost as if he was escaping from something. Then he turned:

"This nonsense about other men has got to stop!" he said loudly. A moment later he had closed the door behind him, not any too gently, and could be heard shouting for Tam.

A closely hugged little daughter acted upon Manners like a hot poultice and drew the rancor from his heart. And when Diana came down for dinner she found them playing at an extremely simple game of cards. Mrs. Langham was watching them over the

top of the evening paper. She always had some better use for the evening paper than reading it. She used it as a curb upon conversation, as a lookout from behind which she might watch faces without appearing to, to keep off the glow of the fire, to kill flies.

Her hand resting lightly on her husband's shoulder, Diana stood for a while and watched the progress of the card game.

"Tam begins to show symptoms of card sense," said Manners. "She gets it from you and your mother. Also she is lucky, and she's giving Father a good trimming."

"Also," said Diana, "it is long past bedtime—as much as ten minutes."

Tam said that she thought all the clocks in the house were wrong. And Manners said that that was another notion which she had inherited directly from her mother.

"The only thing Muzzer never misses," he said, "is the train for town."

And he wished at once that he had said no such thing. Diana hated sarcasms and what she called "references." But she accepted this one with a tolerant smile, and said sweetly:

"I may make an exception to-morrow," she said, "because I'm proposing to catch a very early one."

Manners dropped the five cards which after a heroic struggle Tam had succeeded in dealing him, and looked up into his wife's face.

"I've come home to see *you*," he said, "and you spend all your time in town. Now please do tell me what has happened to take you in again to-morrow?"

"Oh," she said, "things that have to be done, and that I haven't been able to do. We can discuss it later if you like."

He did not enjoy the tone of her voice. It hinted at a great repression. Mrs. Langham had not missed this hint either. Her eyes could no longer be seen over the top of the evening paper.

CHAPTER VIII

VERY soon after dinner she wished them good-night and withdrew. She had divined that Manners was most impatient for his wife's explanation of her announced trip to town; and knowing what she knew, or rather fearing what she feared, she preferred to be out of sight and out of sound. Her progress up the stairs to her room was slow and halting. Her knees felt unaccountably loose and weak. Manners had talked very little during dinner. And she knew that he was smarting with the sense of Diana's injustice to him and that his temper was rising. Diana knew this also.

He began abruptly: "How about this early train business?"

"Do you think," she said quietly, "that you make the house so pleasant for me that I want to stay in it more than I have to? I've told you that I was going to try to do better; but you do nothing but scold me and find fault with me, and rake up things that are past and dead, and that ought to be done with. I'm going to town because I can't stand it here. I can't stand it!"

He had not anticipated any such outbreak. The feeling which it aroused in him was not resentment, but a sickening fear.

"I shall see friends," she flung out, "who are fond

of me and true to me; and who give me the strength and courage to face what I have to face."

"Yes," he said, "the kind of friends who have made all the trouble between us! Is it friends you are going to see to-morrow, or *a* friend? A friend who has brought something so noble and spiritual into your life that you can no longer bear to face any of your duties as a wife or as a mother?"

She had risen and walked the length of the room and back, her brow drawn with pain and her hands so tightly interlocked that the knuckles were smooth and white, like bones. Manners was growing reckless.

"Do you hate me, Diana? You act sometimes as if you hated me."

"Do you think I'd be here if I hated you?" she answered; but in her eyes there was nothing but a kind of hunted antagonism. "You'd have seen the last of me long ago if I hated you."

"Then for God's sake what *is* the matter?"

"There is nothing the matter," she said. But he knew that she was lying. And she knew that he knew. She had the expression of a bound and helpless animal that expects to be struck. Manners rose to his feet. He was trembling all over with fear.

"You must tell me," he said. "You've got to tell me."

The anger had oozed out of him; he fairly clamored for her confidence.

"Nothing can be worse than not knowing. I am your friend, your oldest friend. I think I'm your best friend. Nothing's so bad that it can't be put right. For heaven's sake put us on a square and honest basis.

Don't be afraid of me. I love you. If you're in trouble I'll do anything, anything in my power, to help you—anything that love and tenderness can suggest!"

She had begun to cry, her face all puckered like a child's, and she wailed:

"It wouldn't do any good to tell you! It wouldn't do any good!"

"You must tell me! You must tell me!"

And suddenly she told him; but she took three paces first, three involuntary paces, perhaps, which made the distance between them greater. It was as if she dreaded some awful outburst which must follow hard upon her confession. She sobbed loudly as she spoke:

"I am in love with another man!"

The face which he loved so, the woe-begone little face at once terrified and brave, moved Manners as he had been moved but once before in all his life. All side-issues were erased from his mind as if by a lightning stroke. Tam, himself. Only one thing was clear: that his Diana was in frightful grief and trouble, and that he must comfort her. It was one of his great moments when, an impulse wholly noble and unselfish driving him, he acted upon it. Diana, whose streaming eyes had never left his face, saw the grim drawn lines of it break and soften into a smile of such tenderness and sweetness and compassion that at once the weight upon her heart seemed lightened.

"Come right to me!" He opened his arms to her, his voice broken with tenderness. "Come right to me! Why, you poor child, it's all right. I'm so glad you've told me. Why, come here! It's just as if you were

another daughter. Oh, you poor child! You poor child!"

Very slowly at first but with increasing momentum she had been drawn toward him. It was as if the tenderness which emanated from him had arms and hands with which to draw her until, with a sudden last quickening, she was in his arms. So a little ship, almost foundered in a storm, slips into the keeping of some safe bay.

There was silence now. He patted her shoulders; he stroked her hair. She smiled through her tears. Oh, how good was confession! How very good! It hurt her so to lie, and now there would be no more lying. It hurt her so to be false; but now the truth was out and she could be true.

But for Manners the great moment had passed. Action had been followed by reaction. His mind, cleansed of all but the once chivalrous purpose, began now to crowd with complexities.

"Is he rich, darling?" he asked.

Between asking this somewhat abrupt and surprising question and receiving Diana's answer, Manners's mind worked very quickly. It was a sudden overmastering desire to be once and forever free from all pain and care that had impelled him to ask the question, and while the answer was pending he was able, though that answer actually came very quickly, to imagine every detail of what he would do if that answer was in the affirmative. He saw himself giving Diana a parting squeeze, a parting pat, leaving her without excuse, running lightly up the stair to his room, taking the the .45 automatic from his bureau drawer, putting

the muzzle quickly in his mouth and quickly pulling the trigger. She would have the man she wanted. He would have peace. The thought of being so soon dead seemed perfectly beautiful to him. Diana's answer brought him back to his senses.

"He hasn't any money at all," she said.

"Then," said Manners instantly, "I'll have to keep on working very hard so there'll be plenty of alimony."

He had accepted the idea of divorce without question.

"Who is he?" he asked.

"Ogden Fenn," she said, "and oh, Frank, dear, his love is so wonderful. It's not what you think. We weren't going to tell you; and I was going to be better about Tam and you; and you weren't ever to know; and we were only going to see each other once in a while."

Manners laughed indulgently.

"The idea of an honest little person like you carrying around a load of deceit like that all the rest of your born days makes me laugh," he said. "I knew there was something wrong almost as soon as I clapped eyes on you. So Mr. Fenn is the lucky dog. I don't mind telling you that I envy him. Come and sit down on the sofa and we'll talk things over."

They might easily have been mistaken for a pair of lovers. His arm was around her, and she leaned confidently against him.

"I'm so relieved you've taken it like this, Frank," she said. "I'm so glad I've told you. I'm so glad!"

"It's too late to get hold of Fenn to-night," said her husband. "But I suppose you could get him to come

to the apartment some time to-morrow morning. I'll go to town with you. But is the *very* early train essential? I'll have a little talk with him first, and then we'll all three have a talk together."

And all the time he talked he kept wishing that Fenn was rich, so that he, Manners, could be comfortably dead. He had been through one period of great agony with Diana; and he did not yet feel man enough to face another.

It was curious that the question of just what Tam's rights and interests were in the matter had not yet presented itself to him. His first thoughts had been entirely concerned with Diana. His second thoughts were almost entirely concerned with himself.

The comforting tones of his voice and the comforting touch of his hand had ceased to be inspired. They had become mechanical.

It was wonderful how she clung to him when they were saying good-night. It was not at all as if she were planning to leave him in the lurch, and to chuck aside, like an outworn garment, the devotion and faithfulness of all his grown years. It was more as if she feared that she were losing him, as if she were trying to turn once more toward her a love that had turned away. But Manners knew very well that it was not the woman in her that clung to him, but the child. And knowing this the tightening pressure with which he in turn held her asked nothing but the right to shield and protect. His heart registered fewer beats than usual instead of more. He did not so much as kiss her cheek, but only pressed against it with his own.

His thoughts traveled in great circles. His very

soul yearned over her and forgave her. His intellect judged her and found her wanting. And the faith that he had in her shook in its boots.

"She *can't* do it!" he thought. . . . "She will do it! She will see things clearly, and then she will do right. . . . She will have her own way as usual, and everybody will have to suffer. She will have to suffer too. . . . She can't do it. . . . She will do it. The grounds will be desertion. Think of me deserting Diana!"

He bit back an hysterical impulse to laugh out loud. It would be foolish to suppose that Diana did not in anyway realize the enormity of the crime she had committed against her husband. But in the forgiving pressure of that husband's arms even her pricking conscience was drugged into a temporary peace.

And indeed it was a little as if her whole being had been drugged into quiescence, and all her emotions. For in five minutes after she had turned out her lights she was sound asleep. Many times during the night Manners stealthily opened the door that was between their rooms and listened. He could hear no sound. So quietly she slept you might have thought her dead.

"She isn't even dreaming now," he thought. "If she isn't faithful to me now, at least she isn't faithless. If she doesn't love me now, neither does she love him. If she is never to be happy, may Almighty God at least reserve for her many thousands of nights like this—long periods of oblivion and peace."

But Manners was already very sorry that he had spoken of giving Diana the divorce which she imagined would make her happy.

"She will get over Fenn," he thought, "as she got over What's-his-name, as she got over me. There'll be a hard time; she'll hate me for a while. But she sha'n't ruin herself and me for a crazy, self-indulgent impulse."

The thought gave him confidence and courage. But these were not unmixed with pessimism and foreboding.

"Suppose," he thought, "that it should turn out to be the real thing—the real thing with both of them?"

He found that he was trembling from head to foot. The night was cold. The fire in his room had gone out. And those inner fires which might have sustained him through a colder night than this had nothing to feed on—nothing.

"And my wife," he thought, "is there in the next room. *My* wife! And the door is unlocked. But just because this world contains a shy, featureless, colorless individual named Fenn, she is tabu—she is sacred! Even if I were freezing to death I must not turn back the warm sheets and blankets that cover her and lie down by her side.

He stood trembling, at times violently. And then suddenly, as at the touch of a conjurer's wand, his mind revolted, anger swept him, and he exclaimed in a voice harsh and ugly:

"Almighty! Is there no justice in this world!"

The next morning, when Diana asked him what sort of a night he had had, he said carelessly, "Oh, pretty good, thanks." But Diana, when he returned the question, answered in the patient voice of one who suffers cheerfully, "Just so-so."

And soon after breakfast they went to town to talk with Ogden Fenn.

Diana was under the impression that she had not had a good night; but as a matter of fact she had slept very well. The chivalrous burst of generosity and tenderness with which Manners had received her confession had affected her nerves like a narcotic.

She had been living in a dream that was half rapture and half nightmare. And the most nightmarish episodes were those in which, having discovered the true state of affairs, her husband figured. It was not as if she was asking him to go through hell for the first time. She had put him through once already, and he knew perfectly well what hell was like. It seemed incredible that he could be facing a second experience with such cheerful fortitude. Did he realize, she wondered, that this time there was no upward path leading out of the hell into which she had plunged him? Did he realize that his love was not as that other love had been? Did he realize that her love for Fenn was no mere sentimentalized gust of passion, but an eternal edifice founded upon every strength in her being? This time her love was spiritual altogether. It could never grow stale, wither nor change.

This time Manners was not merely to be knocked over from an ambush and somewhat frolicsomely tortured by the wayside. But upon a cross, firmly planted like a telegraph pole, he was to be nailed for the rest of his time on earth. It would not be possible to separate her from Fenn. They had plumbed every contingency. They would fight to lie upon the right side of the blanket, and be respectable in the eyes of

the world; but if the worst came to the worst they would make the wrong side of the blanket do, for love like theirs was stronger than life, stronger than death, and far, far stronger than justice.

At the station, going to town by the same train, were many people whom they knew more or less well. And Manners marveled at the smiling naturalness with which Diana greeted them. He would have marveled at his own smiling naturalness if he could have known how smiling and natural it really seemed. He gave the impression of a man upon whom was no shadow whatever. And when Harry Crowninshield suddenly announced in his boisterous way "All bets are off! Frank's still in love with his wife," he had been able to answer with an equal zeal and boisterousness: "Why shouldn't I be? We've only been married ten years."

It was astonishing how few people knew that there had ever been any real trouble between them. They were often referred to even by their closest friends, as models of all the domestic virtues. It was well known that Diana indulged herself with occasional flirtations, but Manners was supposed to be genuinely amused by these, and Diana was supposed to engineer them from beginning to end with her tongue in her cheek.

Manners was by no means unhappy. He had not stormed or raved when Diana had confessed to him. On the contrary he had been very generous and in this knowledge found a certain complacency. He could have been proud of himself with better reason if his generosity had been coldly calculated, instead of being

forced from him by an irresistible impulse. For the rest his mind and his feelings were in a state of bewilderment, of chaos, in which the elements had not yet crystallized into passions or judgments. He looked forward with perfect calmness to his interview with Fenn. He even thought that it would be a good idea to make friends with Fenn. And in the uncrystallized state of his feelings he imagined himself perfectly capable of doing so.

"He must be a gentleman," Manners thought, "or else Diana couldn't possibly have fallen in love with him. And he must be a decent sort or else I'd be hunting him with a gun. At the same time he doesn't belong to the same world that we do, and it ought not to be hard to get around him and manage him."

If Manners had any definite plan it was this: To show Fenn the impracticability of the affair going on indefinitely, and to induce him, wholly for Diana's sake, to break with her; not suddenly and drastically, of course, but by degrees. He would by no means forbid them to see each other. But with Fenn's connivance they should see each other less and less, until the time should be ripe for a definite and complete break.

"That," thought Manners, "is what I'd do if I'd got myself into the mess that Fenn's in, and I'd do it without any urging from the husband."

They reached their apartment a few minutes before the time at which Fenn had promised to meet them there, and because the place was small and the partitions thin, Hilda, Diana's maid, was at once de-

spatched upon an interminable round of errands. Diana had made out the list in the train.

"How are we going to stage-manage this affair?" Manners asked. "Do we both see Fenn at once, or do you see him first, or do I?" He spoke laughingly, and Diana, keen and full of life at the immediate prospect of seeing her lover, and hearing the sound of the voice that had grown so dear, laughingly answered:

"Oh," she said, "I'll let him in and turn him over to you, and then I'll go in the front room and twiddle my thumbs till I'm sent for. And then I suppose he'll want to see me alone. . . ."

At this moment the doorbell rang, and Diana darted into the hall with an eagerness that stabbed her husband like a knife. He heard the sound of the door opening and of their mingled voices. And then there was a silence. And Manners knew as surely as if God had told him that during the silence his wife was giving her lips to another man.

He had anticipated no such outrageous breach of good manners and of common decency. And the imperturbable calm of which he imagined himself to be possessed was darkly and almost violently ruffled.

During the next half hour Manners found himself looking oftener at Fenn's mouth than at any other part of him. But he made no other outward manifestation of his real feelings. He seemed more like a good friend of Diana's than her outraged husband.

Manners began the interview with a smile and an offer of cigarets. At the same time he said:

"I hope you are not as embarrassed as I am."

Fenn gave no evidence of embarrassment, though he felt himself to be in an exceedingly trying situation. He accepted a cigaret, gave thanks for it, and lighted it. He was a taller, better-proportioned and altogether a more significant man than Manners had thought. He had a good nose and very fine teeth. Like most men who have been brought up in the West he was a shade too well-dressed. The shyness and lack of ease which he had showed at their first meeting seemed to have been of the moment. His voice and his whole manner were very easy now and very quiet.

"I'm distressed by what has happened," said Manners. "But I should not be honest if I said that I was surprised. You are not my wife's first affair."

"She has told me," said Fenn.

"And that being the case, I am not as badly frightened as I might be. My wife will get over this." Fenn said nothing.

"Before," said Manners, "having no precedent to go on, I insisted on a sudden and drastic separation. I said that they mustn't see each other any more or communicate. Diana demanded one final interview (women always do, I imagine) and of course I had to give in to that. I imagine, but I am not sure, that Diana asked the man to run away with her, and that he, having some faint residue of common sense, and some faint regard for the integrity of his skin, refused. Anyway they said good-by. And three months later the love that Diana had had for that man was as dead as a doornail. But she had tasted liberty, and since that time she has not been a very satisfactory wife. But she has been a good mother. She hasn't been

consistent in her loves or in her friendships. Those come and go. But she has been a mighty good mother, and a wise mother. That is the one trait in Diana which we have any reason to believe permanent. She will get over caring for you, just as she got over caring for me, and just as she got over caring for the other fellow. This is not open to argument. If she stops seeing you, she will forget all about you. I have been in love with her for twenty years, ever since she was a little girl. I have lived with her for ten years, and I know what I am talking about."

"I hope," said Fenn very quietly, "that you are not going to tell me that I mustn't see her any more. She is very unhappy and her nerves are in very bad shape. It isn't easy for her to hurt you."

"I am not going to *tell* anybody to do anything. I want this affair to die, of course, and the sooner the better. But I am not going to kill it. I made that mistake the other time. There is no need of repeating that mistake. Diana's feeling for you is too violent. It will die of exhaustion."

Fenn made no comment, but he looked a little sceptical.

"If it doesn't," said Manners, "if it doesn't die of its own accord, why you, of course, are the person who must kill it. I take it for granted that you are not thinking of yourself, any more than I am thinking of myself, and that what we both want is Diana's happiness."

"I have said right along that I thought Diana's best chance of happiness was to stick by you and Tam."

The man was so obviously sincere that a real weight

was lifted from Manners's spirits, but he couldn't help saying: "It's a great pity that you allowed a situation to develop in which so obvious a thing as that ever had to be discussed at all. But I don't blame you too much. You don't look to me in the least like a man who deliberately wrecks another man's happiness. And I am convinced that you would not have made love to my wife if she hadn't wanted you to."

"I hope you believe that I do love Diana."

"That is why I count on you to do what is best for her, without considering yourself."

"I am very grateful to you for taking all this so sensibly and calmly. Your position isn't at all pleasant."

"The first time I was in this position, I thought almost entirely in terms of pistols. But the other fellow, you see, had taken Diana's love from me. You haven't done that. I had already lost it when you came along. Still, you have taken a good deal. I think she never stopped being fond of me. . . ."

"She *is* fond of you, and she admires you more than anyone."

"That ought to be enough, after ten years, for a wife whose husband is still in love with her, and who has always been faithful to her in word and deed. But it doesn't seem to be. I may count on you, then?"

"I will do anything in my power to make Diana happy."

"So will I. But at the moment I'm not in the running. There is nothing that I *can* do. I have to go back to California to finish some work. I shall have to be off-stage for some time; but I shall try to be tolerant and kind. You will have to be the real god

out of the machine. I sha'n't make any rules about your seeing each other. I couldn't if I wanted to. You must use your own judgment about that. But since you agree that Diana's best chance of ultimate happiness is with Tam and me, you'll arrange to see less and less of her, and even if you don't cool toward her, you'll pretend to. Is that right?"

Fenn drew and expelled a long breath.

"I'm sorry for *you,*" said Manners quickly. "I'm mighty sorry. You do love her, I know that, and it's going to be very hard for you. But your feelings simply can't be considered, can they?"

"Of course not," said Fenn.

"You see, I've done no real wrong. I've been faithful, I've furnished support, I haven't been cruel. Diana couldn't get a divorce in any State of the Union if I defended. In any case she couldn't have Tam. It isn't as if anything good could ever come of your love for each other. Nothing good ever does come of selfishness and injustice. There is no use saying that to Diana in her present state of mind. But you aren't temporarily insane, and you know it's true."

He smiled suddenly.

"If Diana finds out that she is not to have a divorce, and that she is not to have Tam, she is quite capable of running away with you."

"You needn't be afraid of me," said Fenn simply. With a sudden impulse of kindness Manners held out his hand.

"Keeping up the thing wouldn't be fair to you either," he said. "Your storm will blow over, too, Fenn. You'll fall in love again, and it will be with

someone a little more eligible than Diana. And I'm sure I wish you luck; you've a rotten time just ahead of you, and I'm obliged to you for being so straightforward and square."

Manners opened the door and called to Diana.

He felt a great pity for her. She must fight her battle all alone. Even Fenn had lined up against her. Fenn was a sensible fellow, nothing villainous about him. It was true that he had erred and strayed from the straight path, but what of that if he was determined to get back to it and keep to it?

He left the lovers in the back room and closed the door on them. He felt generous and magnanimous. He would be immeasurably kind to Diana. He could afford to be. How wise he had been to see Fenn and have that talk with him! He and Fenn might even become friends. Stranger things have happened.

He went into the front room and shut the door so that he could not even hear the murmur of their voices. And he had no sooner done this than he began to wonder what they were saying and what they were doing. Why, they were kissing, of course, and they were telling each other how glad they were that their affair was no longer a guilty secret. From the man whom they had so greatly wronged they had had nothing but toleration and kindness. He had sanctioned this meeting and all future meetings. He had forbidden nothing; he had made no threats. They could not but be grateful; that Fenn would not from now on play fair was unthinkable.

Toward the end of the half hour which he had to himself in the front room, Manners thought less about

his own magnanimity and more about the injustice that had been done him. "If Fenn," he thought, "is willing to break it off now, why wasn't he willing to break it off as soon as it started? Why didn't he? It isn't in the least as if Diana had been maltreated. She is too honest to have told him any definite hard-luck story. At the worst she can only have looked things."

He tried to keep his mind off the idea of Diana kissing another man and being kissed by him. And of course he couldn't. And for the first time since Diana's confession, jealousy, cold and ugly, stirred in his breast.

A tolerant and placid attitude toward their meetings was not going to be easy. It might be impossible. What reason had he for trusting Fenn? He had none. To have made love to Diana in the first place was a blackguardly trick. "How do I know," thought Manners, "that he hasn't repeated to her every word I said to him? How do I know they aren't laughing at me? . . . When he leaves I could go to the top of the stair with him and send him down head-first. . . ."

The steep, deep, narrow stair-well with the marble wall at the bottom came vividly into his mind. Almost he could hear the rush and the clatter of Fenn's descent, and the crash of Fenn's head against the marble. At the thought of killing Fenn, Manners felt no compunction whatever. It would serve the interfering fool right. And Diana would never know. She would always think that her lover had slipped and fallen.

The wave of jealous insanity swept Manners from head to foot and passed. Reason told him that the fall in all probability would not kill Fenn, and that thereafter there could never be any hope of coming to terms with Diana. The present must be suffered so that the future might have in it sweet and honest things.

But somehow or other he must put a stop to the kissing. He would simply tell Diana that even if she couldn't feel as his wife should, she had the power to behave as his wife should—while she remained his wife (he would throw in that sop of comfort)—and he expected it of her.

Presently Diana called him into the back room, and very soon after that Ogden Fenn made his departure.

They discussed Fenn for a time as if he had been a new acquaintance in whom they both took an equal interest. But it was not so much what they said of him which gave this impression as the tones of their voices.

"I liked all that I saw of him," said Manners. "He struck me as being sincere and manly. I am glad you didn't pick a bounder."

"He has the sweetest disposition," said Diana, who had a very radiant look. "He thinks of nothing but my happiness."

"I am sure he thinks of your happiness. . . . I told him that I had no objection to your seeing each other every once in a while."

"He told me."

"And I hope, dear, that you won't abuse the privilege. I'm trying to smile and look cheerful; but you

know all this is pretty rough on me. It's a hard smash to take standing."

"I know," said Diana.

"Of course the right thing for you to do would be to give him up—never see him again. But I don't ask that."

"If you made me give him up, I'd just die."

Manners put his hands on his wife's shoulders and smiled very sweetly at her.

"Honey bug," he said, "you said exactly the same thing about giving up What's-his-name; but here you are alive and well, and desperately in love with some one else. I have every reason to think that you would forget all about Fenn if you gave him up. You haven't a good record for fidelity. In eleven years you have been in love three times, and each love was to last forever."

"I can't ever make you understand or believe," cried Diana passionately. "I know that; but this is different—different."

For the needs of the moment, anyway, her voice carried conviction, and dread like an impending nausea filled her husband. Words that he attempted to utter tripped and stumbled in his mouth, and he turned from her with a choking sound. But instantly Diana flung her arms around him, and clung to him tightly.

"Do you think it's easy for me to hurt you, Frank? Do you? If you and I aren't to stay friends, then I *am* done for."

"Oh, Diana," he cried, "if it hurts you so to hurt me, why do you do it, why do you do it? Why didn't you keep your eyes in the boat; why did you ask your-

self into this thing? Why didn't I ask Fenn what he meant by making love to my wife? Because I know that he never would have dared if you hadn't invited him; no man would. You looked sad, and unhappy, and misunderstood, and he fell for it. And now having done this wicked thing you try to shield yourself by saying how much it hurts you to hurt me!"

All the while that he was so crying out in his pain and indignation a small inner voice kept whispering to him, and saying: "Idiot, you are only doing harm! Where is that steady kindness, that steady tolerance, that wonderful patience which you promised yourself to exercise?"

She answered him swiftly: "Do you suppose I don't know what I'm giving up. Everybody will blame me. Everybody will be on your side. Even my family will be against me. Do you think I haven't counted the cost? You have lots and lots of compensation, your talent, and your reputation, the place you've made for yourself in the world, all sorts of wonderful things. I had a share in all that; do you think I like to give it up? . . . Frank, dear, this is life or death to me. I must have him! I must have him! He is so noble, so unselfish. He loves me so!"

The inner voice cried out to Manners: "For heaven's sake keep quiet! Don't say a word!" Nevertheless he said things, and as each word passed his lips he regretted having spoken it.

"Noble and unselfish men don't make love to other men's wives. I know you're badly mashed on Fenn, but the less you talk about his nobleness, the less likely you are to get yourself laughed at. The whole busi-

ness is rotten, and you know it. The only thing to be said in its favor is that it isn't rottener!"

Diana's nerves gave way with a crash.

"If you say one more word against him," she cried, her face white and contumelious, "it *will* be rotten. I'll walk right out of this place and go away with him."

Manners mastered himself with a great effort. He was trembling all over, and she had frightened him badly.

"It's just nerves, dear," he said weakly. "They went back on me. I couldn't control 'em. It's all right now. It sha'n't happen again."

CHAPTER IX

Ogden Fenn had hardly any money at all; but then he had never worked very hard. He believed implicitly in his ability to support Diana, and in time to give her at least such luxury as she had been accustomed to; for beneath his shy and quiet exterior there was a good deal of self-reliance and considerable strength. There is no doubt that he put Diana's happiness ahead of his own, and that if he had really believed that it would be best for her in the long run, he would have been ready and willing to give her up. He had even promised Manners to do so—gradually. But he had made that promise with mental reservations.

For what seemed so beautiful to himself and Diana the law has an ugly term. It calls it "guilty affection." And doll the thing as they would in crowns of glory and bright robes of present renunciation, that was all it amounted to. But to them, simply because they had resisted technical sin, it seemed almost as if their passion ought to be applauded and admired. They had not chosen to be in love with each other; it was a state in which they had suddenly found themselves. Therefore they were indeed guiltless of any wrongdoing whatsoever. And if others must be hurt, who could blame them?

It would have pained Fenn immeasurably could he have heard the terse comment to which Diana's brothers would later treat the affair when it came to their

knowledge. These would say: "Diana's makin' a fool of herself, and of course the man's a cur."

But Diana, blind with love-sickness, either thought the opposite or was not able to think at all; and Fenn, sensible though he was and practical, did not for a moment realize the empire of comfort, habit and position which Diana stood to give up for him. He had in exchange only his love to offer her, and his understanding of her. At the moment Diana believed that this understanding was very perfect. She had once thought the same thing about Manners's understanding of her, only to find that at their first difference of opinion it was very much less perfect than she had thought. She would have differences of opinion with Fenn, and judging by all the precedents which she had set in the course of her life, married or unmarried, she would not be guided by his judgment, but would follow her own sweet will; and be sorry that she had, very likely, and quite unwilling or it may be really unable to express that sorrow.

They had already had one difference of opinion: an elemental difference. Fenn, believing that she was best off where she was, had actually suggested that they stop seeing each other; but Diana had so overwhelmed that suggestion with tears and clingings that Fenn had sworn upon his honor as a man and lover that he would stand by her through thick and thin, and that her wish should be his law till death parted them. He made her indeed the same sort of thrilling and even blood-curdling promises which Diana, some ten years ago, had made to Manners in the presence of their families, their friends, and the Bishop of New York.

Fenn reached his modest rooms and threw himself into the one comfortable chair. He was glad to be alone. He had hated the talk with Manners. But Manners had acted like a brick. Would he consent to a divorce? Diana was sure that he would, but Manners had not said so in Fenn's hearing. He had on the contrary implied that Fenn must gradually cool toward her and let her come to her senses. Cool toward Diana? Never.

And in his heart and soul he believed that he never would. His good sense seemed to have abandoned him. When a woman isn't happy with one man she ought to live with another. He had lived most of his own life in the West, in some of whose States the divorce laws amount to no more than a bad smell. He believed in such laws, and in the present circumstances relied upon them. He believed also that his affair with Diana was not the usual thing at all; but inspired and God-given. What if Diana had come a little more than half way to meet him? The beautiful thing must have happened in any case. It was predestined.

Fenn had been desperately in love three times. He had thought each of these passions beautiful, predestined and everlasting. But now he told himself: "They weren't at all like this. This is different. *This* is the real thing."

And he truly believed that it was the real thing and that it would last until he died. He might force himself to give up Diana, for his own good; but the deed would kill him. Turn and twist as he would he could see nothing but her dear face, sad and adoring.

God, how gladly he would die for her!

All the way out in the train, Diana sat with her hand linked in her husband's arm. He had made his peace with her. He had taken back all his harsh, bitter words. He had chewed them fine and swallowed them. And he had told her again and again that his only thought was for her happiness. And since Diana's idea of happiness was to have both Fenn and Tam, she felt toward her husband an immense tenderness and gratitude. She believed that he would at once begin to make arrangements for being quietly and respectably divorced; and that in the meantime he would be sweetness itself about her meetings with Fenn. She believed that if she could only tell him about Fenn, explain Fenn, make him see how wonderful Fenn was, the thought of how much happiness she must inevitably find with such a paragon would be real comfort to him and make his own personal sacrifices seem easy.

They elected to walk from the station to their house and she did indeed talk to him about Fenn; but not at great length. For she made the discovery that the wonderfulness of Fenn was more easily felt by instinct than explained in words. She could not begin by saying how strong and handsome he was; for he was neither. She could not tell of showy sacrifices which he had made, for he had made none. She could not, in short, with nothing but the letters of the alphabet to work with, make a mountain out of a molehill.

Manners listened with gentleness and gravity. Her words went in at one of his ears and out at the other. He answered her almost mechanically: "He seemed to be a genuinely nice fellow. I really liked him. He

talked very sensibly. I am sure he puts your happiness ahead of his own."

Diana agreed emphatically. And by the terms of her agreement she showed with a naïveté, unconsciously humorous, the road by which she imagined that her happiness could best be reached.

"Yes," she said devotedly, "he will do anything I want."

At her side walked a husband who from the day of their marriage had for some years freely given her her own way in everything. It was not until she had stopped loving him that he had ever offered any serious opposition to her inclinations. "I ought," he now thought, "to have opposed some of them very firmly while she still loved me. If I had done that she might love me still. I ought never to have given in about going to Newport that first summer. I ought never to have given in about this and that."

He could not be sure whether his failure to oppose Diana in decisions which in the end hurt them both had been due to weakness or to his love for her. He wished to put the whole blame on love; for no man likes to confess even to himself that his will is really weak.

As a matter of fact, his will had strengths and weaknesses. His will to work was extraordinarily strong. But when it came to opposing Diana his will was so weak that he had to call to its aid logic and argument. Then into a defeat rapidly turning into a rout he would throw his last reserves, sarcasm and anger, and see them completely annihilated. He had never been able to give Diana a No that meant No.

And that undoubtedly was the real reason why their married life had for some time been shaping itself toward disaster and tragedy.

Manners was to blame. Diana had splendid qualities in her, and her husband had failed to bring them out. He had spoiled her.

Diana spent the next day and night in town, and the day and night following. Manners had stipulated that he be told when she was going to see Fenn and where, and she told him. She was to see Fenn on the afternoon of the first day and she was to dine with him, and afterward he was to come to the apartment "because there's so much to talk over." The next night she was to have him to dinner at the apartment and afterward they would go to a show or just sit and talk. Manners had received this announcement with an outward show of tranquillity. But he hadn't refrained from saying: "All right, dear; but that's not my idea of seeing each other once in a while."

"It's because just at first," she said, "there's so much we have to talk over."

She was standing in a bright light with her hands raised to her hat.

In common with most of the young women of her generation Diana carried about with her in what is called a vanity bag a stick of red grease with which she now and then intensified the color of her lips. In common with the other young women she did this not for the effect, but to keep her lips from becoming too dry. And in common with the other young women

she could never satisfactorily explain why a stick of colorless grease would not have served as well.

It was a habit to which Manners had strongly objected again and again. Diana's lips needed no embellishment. They were sweet lips and they were not pale.

She finished putting on her hat, and then she put on her veil. And Manners noted that the finishing touch of the red grease-stick which usually intervened between the two maneuvers had been omitted. She was going to town, then, with her lips as God made them.

Manners could not trust himself to speak. And he turned away so that she should not see the reflection of his face in the mirror.

"For years," he thought, "I have had to kiss grease; but Fenn gets the real thing."

And he began to tremble from head to foot with a diabolic and homicidal anguish. He got through the ensuing two days and nights as best he could. It is a horrible thing to be stabbed in the back by the person you love most, and to be tortured without rhyme or reason. The hellish injustice of it so rankled in him that he could not eat. Neither could he sleep. For short stretches of time, and entirely for Tam's benefit, he managed to force a certain cheerful gaiety. And that was all the poor fellow could do.

And though it went deeply against his principles of conduct he could not help showing his depression to Mrs. Langham. His smile trembled at the corners; his laugh was mechanical; and the reasons which he gave for his loss of appetite were not well invented.

Mrs. Langham herself might have passed for a singularly unobservant woman. She did not appear to think that anything was wrong with anybody. She was serene, cheerful and ready to talk on any subject at any time. The repression of any outward manifestations of what she really felt was natural to her, and she had cultivated her gift until it was notorious.

But inwardly she was half-dead with anxiety, for the treatment which Diana had accorded to Manners since his return from California seemed almost maliciously calculated to hurt and estrange. Diana's flirtation with Fenn had been a source of irritation and worry, and she had at one time considered telegraphing her son-in-law to come home; but that the flirtation had in it monstrous possibilities for harm was only just beginning to occur to her and to recur. She, too, had always had faith in Diana's ultimate good sense. And this faith was not easily shaken. Diana indeed was so like her mother that it was almost impossible to believe that there could be anywhere in her a loose screw. She had the same poise and dignity; the same proud and charming way of carrying her head; the same power to make shy people comfortable and at home. She, too, had immense power to repress her deeper emotions and to be calm in the midst of all but the most dire catastrophies.

Mrs. Langham longed with a poignant longing to know what was passing in her son-in-law's mind. And it would have lightened the load which he was carrying if he had had any inkling of the intensity of the sympathy which she felt for him. He did not even know that in the circumstances which had arisen

she would sit in judgment on her own daughter, condemn her, and take his side. She ought, of course, because she was just; but the relationship between mother and daughter is not often to be shattered by a mere sense of justice.

Diana did not return to the country till the afternoon of the third day. She knew that she had been self-indulgent to the point of cruelty; and the drawn appearance of Manners's face and the unkind expression in his eyes told her that there would be a storm presently, but her own face showed neither regret nor concern. She felt so bolstered by the strength of Fenn's lovingness and consideration that she feared nothing.

The storm broke almost at once. Manners followed her into her room, and closed the door after him.

"Diana," he said tensely, "I told you that you could see each other once in a while. That didn't mean six times in two days, and I don't know how many times to-day."

"I haven't seen him at all to-day," she said coldly, and began to take off her hat.

"It isn't altogether what you make me suffer, Diana. It's the looks of the thing. You'll get yourself talked about."

"Don't be afraid of that. Ogden is just as thoughtful of my reputation as you are."

"People know that I'm only on for a few days, and they see you spending all your time in town, and they'll talk."

"Let them! What do they know?"

"It isn't what people know that matters; it's what people think."

Now, though Diana habitually repressed her deeper emotions, she could display them on occasion. Sometimes she ruled her husband by charm; sometimes by wistfulness; sometimes by coldness and scorn; sometimes by sobs. In her differences with him it never occurred to her to fight fair, and to let a decision rest with logic and good sense.

"First," she said in a voice almost frozen with injury, "you say that you think of nothing but my happiness, and then you complain because I go where that happiness is. That *is* logical! Oh! I was so happy and relieved when I had told you and you were so sweet and forgiving and friendly. But I might have known that it was only a pose and that you couldn't keep it up. I wish to heaven I hadn't told you!"

"I'd have found out, Diana. The thought of your keeping the thing from me indefinitely is ridiculous. I did mean to be steadily kind and forbearing. Also when I said that you were to see each other once in a while I *meant* once in a while. I tried to be fair and just. I don't see why you can't try."

"Oh! You're always so fair and just!" she flung these words at him like buckshot from a gun. He had roused the tigress in her; she was fighting for her right to do as she pleased, when she pleased and where she pleased; for her right to love and to be loved; for her right to break a solemn contract the moment her part of it became irksome. She was fighting, you may say, for her favorite cubs.

"Don't you ever *want* to get over caring for this fellow and do right?" he cried.

"I don't know what you mean by doing right. To live with a man I don't love, to be his chattel, his cow—that's not my idea of doing right. You seem to think that you own me body and soul."

"I think that when you promised to be my partner till death you meant it."

"Oh, that!" she exclaimed. "I also promised to love you for the same length of time. Is it my fault if I've stopped?"

"If I'd ever stopped loving you, Diana, you'd never have known it. I'd never have done to you what you've done to me. Not once, but twice."

"You say you wouldn't, but you don't *know*. And I don't know, and I don't believe it anyway."

"Your first blow-up stopped hurting you three months after you stopped seeing What's-his-name. Stop seeing this man and it will be the same."

"*You* don't understand," she said in a more restrained voice. "I'm older and I know my own mind."

"It's your heart you don't know, Diana. I can't help going on precedent. Your love, even your friendship, is not to be relied on. But if you are so sure this time, why not test the matter out? That's only fair to me. I love you, and I want to keep you, and I think that in the long run your best chance of happiness is with Tam and me. Test your love for Fenn. Promise not to see him or communicate with him for a year, and then if you feel as you do now, why I'll furnish

grounds and you can divorce me and marry him in no time at all."

The idea of separating her from Fenn for a year obsessed him. He spoke eloquently of its advantages; of its fairness to all concerned. Speaking for himself, the year should be free from recriminations. He would make it pass as quickly and pleasantly as possible. It should be passed in the gayest and pleasantest places. If he could not earn enough money he would borrow it.

"This way," he pleaded, "Fenn has his chance; you have yours, and I have mine. If at the end of the year you still loved Fenn, why I could better bear my hurt for the cleanness of the wound. I shouldn't feel the way I do now: that for no good reason I'd been stabbed in the back, and must take my medicine whether I like it or not. It's the rank injustice of what you propose to do to me that makes my position impossible. You propose to rearrange the whole rest of my life without first finding out if your love for Fenn has the quality of permanency. If it hasn't, and you don't find out till you've divorced me, why God help us all. . . . We've had lots and lots of good times together even after you stopped loving me. If you take the big step and find you've made a mistake, why there's no getting back—even to them. Just a year, Diana! Just a year in which to make sure whether all that's left of our lives really must be rearranged or not? Somehow I don't picture Tam getting along without both of us. And your mother's happy with us. . . ."

"You could see Tam whenever you liked," Diana

interrupted; "you could have her for part of the time."

"You won't even consider what I propose?"

"Look here," she said, "I might promise not to see him. I couldn't keep it. I'd just die. And there's no sense in it. Do you think it gives me pleasure to hurt you? Do you think it gives me pleasure to give up all the things I'll have to give up? Why make me any more wretched than I am? You say you want your chance. Frank, you haven't got a chance. Even if Ogden didn't exist, I don't want to go back. We've been miserable together for years. And you know it."

"We haven't!" exclaimed Manners. "And you know it. I ask for justice and a fair chance. My heaven, that's not asking for much. You don't even think of Tam!"

"Why drag in Tam? You don't think of her either. You want to keep me and that's all you think about."

"I ought to know better than to try to argue with you when you are sick. I'm sorry."

The coldness in their voices was awful. It was impossible to believe that the woman was very fond of the man, and that the man was passionately in love with the woman. Almost it seemed as if they hated each other.

"Sneering isn't the way to get anything out of me," said Diana.

"No. Nor loving you, nor being faithful to you, nor going in debt for you. Nor can anything be gotten out of you by reason or by logic. I wish to God I could stop loving you."

"If I'm such an utter rotter, why in heaven's name do you want to keep me?"

"Because I do love you," he cried, and all the coldness in his voice melted as before a sudden hot fire. "I love you kind or cruel. I love every inch of you. Every good thing in you, every bad thing. I've loved you since you were a little girl. When I say that I'll always love you it means something. If you'd died when you were a little girl I'd never have married. I'd have mourned for you all the rest of my born days. And I come back after long months to what I've come back, and I tell you I can't stand it. I'm your husband. You belong to me. And I'm not going to be chucked for a whim!—or a little pin-headed sneak who's made love to you behind my back. . . ."

With the speed of lightning, Diana sprang to the bureau and snatched up her hat.

"That's the end!" she cried savagely. "I can't stand any more. I'm going away with him."

"If you do I'll kill him like a dog."

"Then I'll kill myself."

There was a sudden rapping on the door, and in the silence that fell between them Tam's shrill voice could be heard gaily demanding admission. It was as if Manners and Diana, red-hot with anger, had been suddenly dipped in ice-water. The hat fell from Diana's shaking hands.

"Just a minute, darling!" she called. And her voice sounded almost natural, even to Manners. He came close to her and spoke in a whisper.

"Don't do what you threatened. Anything but that. Forgive a man who's half mad with love and disap-

pointment. I can't feel about him the way you do. But I certainly didn't mean what I said."

Diana's face and voice were relentlessly cold.

"If you ever say one more word against him—I'll walk right out of the house and I'll go straight to his rooms. So you'd better be careful. Now pull yourself together and let Tam in."

CHAPTER X

DIANA had gone to bed. She had talked very little at dinner. After dinner she had read at a book. It might have been any book. It made no impression on her. She had already forgiven her husband for what he had said about Fenn. It was wrong to have seen Fenn six times in two days. It wasn't playing the game. She knew that. She knew her own faults and failings very well indeed. But she hated to admit them, and she had neither the will nor the strength to correct them. When she rose to say good-night, her face had an expression of great sweetness. She turned a cool cheek for her husband to kiss and gave his shoulder an affectionate pat. Then she went upstairs. Mrs. Langham and Manners heard the sound of her door closing. Manners looked for a while at the advertisement sheet of the evening paper which concealed his mother-in-law's face. He made up his mind to speak to her about Diana and Fenn. He wondered if he should tell her now and give her a bad night. Or if he should wait till morning. And all of a sudden it seemed to him impossible to put off the telling. The need of counsel and sympathy was imperative. His own mind had become impossible company.

"Mrs. Langham," he said abruptly, "I've had some bad news. I think you'll hate it too. Diana is very

much in love with this man Fenn; she wants to divorce me and marry him."

Mrs. Langham put down her newspaper very quietly and said: "She hasn't the shadow of an excuse!"

It was wonderful how that one phrase comforted him. It was as if to a man on a desert rock a companion had descended from heaven. The gates of talk were open. He could tell somebody everything. He could abuse Diana if he wanted to; for without an instant's hesitation Diana's own mother had declared herself on his side.

"No. She hasn't," he said, "but I can't tell her that, or argue with her. She's in such a state that she can't put two and two together."

"I've been very much worried all winter. At one time I thought of telegraphing you. It was a great relief to me when you *did* come."

"It's very curious. I don't know why I came, except that I had a sort of intuition. I got thinking that I ought to come. Mrs. Appleyard was furious."

"If Fenn had been a public fascinator," said Mrs. Langham, "I should have telegraphed; but he seemed such a mild, retiring person! I can't believe even now that Diana is in earnest."

"She is just as much in earnest now," said Manners, "as she was the other time. That is, she thinks as she thought then, that this is a *Faust* and *Marguerite* affair; *Héloïse* and *Abelard*. Experience has taught her nothing. Her sense of humor has abandoned her."

He smiled hopefully. Mrs. Langham was so calm and her voice was so matter-of-fact and sensible, that the probable seemed the sure. Of course Diana would

tire of Fenn. It was a million-to-one shot. It was a sure thing.

"It will be very horrid while it lasts," he said. "What do you think I ought to do?"

"Have you *done* anything?"

"I've had several rows with Diana," he said, "but rows only sink me deeper into disfavor; and I shall try not to have any more. Then I've had a talk with Fenn." And he told her about that.

"Do you think you can count on him?" she asked.

"Of course Diana has made him believe she has been unhappy with me. He may feel that he is a knight-errant called to the rescue of a damsel in distress. He may feel that he is in honor bound to go on with the rescue. If he is as weak with Diana as I am, he will have a hard time breaking with her. If he is really in love with her it will be very hard for him to taper off and pretend that he isn't. In her present state of mind Diana is preternaturally sharp and suspicious. But wouldn't you think that after the lesson she's had! . . .

"Married women," said Mrs. Langham, "are subject to these attacks. But when there are children and the husband is a decent sort they rarely lead to divorce. Of course, Diana seems utterly unbalanced and irresponsible at the moment; but you may be sure that she is doing a great deal of thinking. She has good blood in her."

"She talks of running away with him; of killing herself."

"That is to frighten you. No matter what happens Diana will not kill herself. She's too much afraid of pain. Women who deliberately stop having children

while they are still in love with their husbands very seldom commit suicide. As for running away!" she laughed. "Diana may run away; but Fenn won't. I believe that I know Ogden Fenn pretty well. Diana has had him here a good deal. I think he has very conventional ideas."

"If he does run away with her," said Manners, "I'll kill him."

"A woman," Mrs. Langham explained, "is all sex. She is sex to her finger-tips. And in her madnesses she loses all sense of proportion and obligation. But a man is only part sex. He is part sex and part man. The man part of him is very cautious; you have only to imagine yourself playing the game that Fenn is playing if you want to know the exact state of his mind. Probably Diana does not talk so wildly to him as she does to you. But if she does, then you may be sure that he is one of the most perplexed and frightened men in New York."

Manners liked to think of Fenn as frightened. The more his mother-in-law talked, the more comforted he felt and the more confident for the future. The taut muscles in his face had relaxed. He looked younger. And Mrs. Langham, perceiving the effect that she was having on him, kept on talking.

"Diana's case," she said, "is not without precedent in her family."

"She has established one pretty good precedent herself," commented Manners.

The color deepened in Mrs. Langham's cheeks, and her eyes brightened. There was a twinkle of mischief in them.

"I was thinking of myself," she said.

"You!" he exclaimed. There was surprise, amusement, almost horror in his voice. And he repeated his exclamation.

"It is very flattering that you should think it so ridiculous," she said, "but it happened, and it was very horrid. I thought all the things that Diana threatens."

"Oh, but there's the great difference!" he cried. "You controlled yourself. You just set your teeth and swallowed hard." She laughed as if some recollection gave her genuine amusement.

"I belong to a more controlled generation than Diana," she explained, "but one Sunday I said that I was too ill to go to church, and as soon as I had the house to myself I lay on the floor and screamed!"

"But I want to know what happened. Did you tell Mr. Langham?"

"He knew that there was something wrong, but he asked no questions. He was very sweet to me while I was pulling myself together. That didn't take very long. And I'm inclined to think that I made my husband a good wife."

"That is too well known even to be considered!"

"Diana," she said, "was ten years old at the time. Think of me, the mother of four children, behaving like that. And I was devoted to my husband. But I felt that at heart I had been a traitor to him, and my conscience had no peace until John was born. John made me feel honest again in my own eyes."

"John's a great boy," said Manners. "I love him. But what did the man do when you broke with him?"

"But I never broke with him. He never knew that I cared about him in that way. It would have been easier for me if there could have been a break; love has to be fed like any other hungry thing. But without telling Mr. Langham or the man himself I couldn't arrange a break. He was a lot younger than Mr. Langham; but they were great friends; and he was always at the house. I simply had to suppress my emotions until suppression became a habit."

"But of course the man cared for you. He *must* have known."

"If he had cared of course he must have known. But I think nothing was ever further from his heart and mind than caring for me in that way. He was simply great friends with us all."

"Then," said Manners, "I deny that you have set a precedent for Diana. The cases are utterly different. All you did was to set a wonderful and courageous precedent, which she hasn't had the courage or the good sense to follow. If you and Diana were alike you would have made love to the man until he was carried off his feet, and then you would have told your husband, glorying in your crime and defying the heavens to make you just, or kind, or unselfish. . . . I wish you'd tell this story to Diana."

"Some day—perhaps."

"Sha'n't you speak to her about this awful mix-up at all?"

"Not unless she speaks to me; or only as a last resort. No one has any influence with her now, except Fenn perhaps. You mustn't think of her as rational. These outbreaks are a form of temporary insanity."

"But you haven't advised me what to do?"

"I should be very kind. I should ask no questions. I should have a smile for her when she comes and a smile when she goes. Don't let her see that you are suffering. Let her see Fenn whenever she wants to. Go away. Go back to California and finish your work. Opposition is very inflaming; remove it and most likely the fire will go out."

"But she expects me to decide about giving her a divorce. In the first shock I'm afraid I did half promise to let her go."

"It was the best thing you could have done. It binds you no more than telling a fib to a sick person. She has no excuse for divorcing you. And you mustn't let her. But I should put off telling her that just as long as possible. Tell her that until your work in California is finished and you have some money, you can't possibly arrange about anything. Perhaps she will have tired of Fenn by the time you come back. Don't hurry back."

Manners thought for a while before answering. Then, his brows contracting:

"I've simply got to trust Fenn," he said, "haven't I? That's the only possible way."

Mrs. Langham nodded.

"He seems a decent sort of fellow," said Manners, doubtfully. He filled his lungs with air, and let it out slowly.

"I suppose," he said, "that most of the time I'll just naturally trust him. And that there'll be other times when I'll be half mad with doubt and fear."

"Frank," said Mrs. Langham, "I'm as fond of you

as I am of my own sons. I would give anything to spare you this."

"You've helped me so much," he said; "so wonderfully!" He rose and held out his hand.

"I'm going to bed," he said, "and thank you a thousand times. . . . If Diana should bolt with this fellow, you'll stay with Tam and me?"

"If you want me," she said. At the door he turned:

"I talk," he said, "as if I wasn't to blame for anything. But I am. I've been awfully hard on Diana sometimes."

"She has nobody to thank for that but herself."

"Sometimes I think that, too. But not always. I'm not sure. I'm kind to Tam. I'm kind to the servants. I don't get mad at you—do I?—but I'm often unkind to Diana. Sometimes I get furious with her. If she'll come back to me I'll be different. I promise. You see, I've expected too much of her. And when she hasn't come across, I've been so disappointed that I've sulked and scolded. But if we can get her through this business, why I sha'n't expect so much of her. I sha'n't expect anything of her. Then if she gives me a little something I'll be surprised and happy about it. And that way there'll never be any excuse to be unkind. Good-night again."

About midnight Mrs. Langham knocked on her son-in-law's door, and then pushed it discreetly open. He was propped up in bed. A book lay face down in his lap.

"I saw the light," Mrs. Langham explained. "Can't you get to sleep?" He shook his head.

"It's freezing cold in here," she said. "I've brought

you a hot-water bottle and a glass of hot milk. You smoke too many cigarets after you go to bed."

He protested against so much attention. But he protested as a little child protests.

"You mustn't mind me," said Mrs. Langham firmly. "I am an old woman."

She gave him the glass of milk, and while he was drinking it she pulled out his bedclothes near the foot of the bed, and placed the hot-water bottle against his feet.

"They are like ice," she said.

She tucked the bedclothes back into place with swift, workmanlike address. Then she took his book and his cigarets away from him, and put out his light.

"Now try to go to sleep," she said. "Good-night."

When she had closed the door a curious thing happened to Manners. He began to cry; quietly as men cry, but with the heartbreaking intensity of a little child. He cried because in his bitter loneliness someone had thought of him and been kind.

The warmth of the hot-water bottle stole deliciously into his feet. The whole bed glowed with it. He turned upon his side and snuggled himself into a comfortable position. Then he cried himself to sleep.

Manners had imagined that his short homecoming would be very gay, and that his energies would be exhausted by dinner-parties and theater-parties. He had thought to see almost all the people he cared about at least once. But so far, owing to Diana's affair, the meetings which he had had with his friends had been sheer accidents. Mary Hastings, however, had telephoned asking him to see her, and a few days later

she had sent him a note by special delivery saying that she really wanted to see him and would not be denied.

So he wanted to see her, wondering if she had just gone out of her way to be friendly, or if she, too, like Mrs. Langham, had been worried by Diana's flirtation with Fenn, and wanted to know the whole truth. If she suspected things, he would tell her. His confidences would go no further; her sympathy would do him good, and her advice might be very helpful. Even if her suspicions had not been tampered with, he might tell her.

To the average passer-by, the huge Hastings house, marching for half a block with Central Park, suggests a mausoleum. But to Manners, who even liked Mary Hastings's unpopular husband, it suggested many good times and much friendliness. The house had figured prominently during the year of his engagement to Diana. A dance had been given there for them, and many dinners and luncheons without end. Diana had even stayed in the house by the week at a time. It had been her town headquarters. The convenient fortress from which as an engaged girl, whose family lived in the country, she had made tremendous sallies upon her trousseau. And with Mary Hastings they had both struck up a wonderful friendship.

Downstairs the house was more suggestive of Hastings than of his wife. It was dark and austere. It contained a certain amount of very expensive and very ugly mid-Victorian furniture with which nothing would induce him to part. It had belonged to his mother, with whom he had always quarreled, and he had perhaps a remorseful sentiment about it. A full-

length portrait of himself lent no cheer to the entrance-hall. He was an angular man, with a bony face and one shoulder hitched a little higher than the other; his expression was at once mean and lordly, jealous and generous, shrewd to the point of genius and childishly vacant. John Sargent had painted the portrait and had told no lies. It was as if an alienist had said: "He is sane at the moment; but he will bear watching."

Manners could never pass that wonderful portrait without stopping to look at it. It made his own talent seem purposeless and blundering. He could never go from that portrait to confront his own "Apple-Tree" that hung over the fireplace in Mary Hastings's little upstairs sitting-room without a feeling of failure and self-contempt. And yet the apple-tree was a joyous thing. John Sargent himself had whistled when he saw it, and had asked if Manners was a child of mortal parents or if some god and goddess had not really been responsible for him?

Mary Hastings's little sitting-room was her favorite place in all the world. There she received her intimates, and there, often with her frank, kind eyes upon the young greens and the delicious pinks of Frank Manners's apple-tree, she faced and thought out her problems. There she came to fight her battles with herself, and thence she emerged serene, friendly, self-sacrificed, victorious.

People said that she had married Hastings for his money and his position. And so she had. But the whole truth was not to be told in one cold-blooded sentence. She had married him to save her father from bankruptcy and to escape the serpents of her mother's

tongue. Hastings had bought her; but she was too honest not to perceive that in allowing herself to be bought she had shared in his crime. She had borne him two children, a boy and a girl. They were bony children with very high foreheads. They had shoulders of unequal height. They had in them no trace of their mother's beauty, either of body or of spirit.

So greatly had Mary Hastings triumphed in her fight with unhappiness and despair that even her intimates did not really know whether she was happy or unhappy. Poise and self-control had become natural to her. Directness, sweetness and simplicity had always been natural.

Manners's "Apple-Tree" and Mary Hastings herself made the room; to the greens and pinks of the tree she offered the strong and rich contrast of black velvet. Her tall, slender, and commanding figure had tempted her dressmaker to the utmost severity in cutting the dress. A large table diamond on her left hand and a short string of splendid, glowing pearls were her only ornaments. Her black hair, which grew low on her forehead in a widow's peak, was brushed straight back. But the hair itself was not straight; neither was it curly. It was strong, bright and waving. Manners liked to compare her face with that Greek face (which of course he had never seen) which launched a thousand ships against Troy. "But Trojan Helen's face," he usually added, "couldn't have been as sweet as Mary's." Men often forgot the sheer classic beauty of her face in the sweetness of its expression.

She did not rise when Manners entered, but held out both hands to him across the steaming tea-table.

"I am not at home to anybody but you," she said. "I had to see you. I must know about Diana."

"I am glad you must, Mary," said Manners, "because I can't think about anything else."

He remembered the difficulties of his nights, and refused tea or anything stronger. And then for a long time, with great gentleness and consideration, he talked about Diana; what she had done, what she was doing, and what she wanted to do. He told his story dispassionately and without comment.

"And your intention, of course," said Mrs. Hastings, when he had finished, "is to let her have her way. But you mustn't."

"She is still fond of me," said Manners hopelessly, "but if I block the road of honor and glory that leads to Fenn she will hate me."

Mrs. Hastings nodded, but said: "She will only hate you as long as she loves him; but even if her love for him is one of the eternities, even if she hates you and makes your life miserable till her dying day, you mustn't let her divorce you."

"Oh," he said wearily, "if I could be sure that her love would last I'd let her go. I'd have to. It would be too cruel to keep her. I love her too much, Mary. I've loved her ever since she was a little girl, and no matter what she does to me I keep right on loving her. I'm a regular old wild goose, I expect."

He sat leaning forward, his elbows on his knees, and his fine workman-like hands dejectedly hanging.

"Diana," said Mrs. Hastings gently, "is thinking only of herself. Fenn is thinking only of himself.

Now I'd give a penny, Frank, to know whom you are thinking of?"

He looked up smiling.

"Perfectly right, Mary. I am thinking only of *myself.*" The certainty seemed rather wonderful to him, and he reflected upon it for some moments. Then he said:

"Absolutely right. If I let Diana go, I think only about how much I must suffer. If I keep her and she hates me I think only about how much I must suffer. I think that I'm thinking about Diana; but I'm not. I haven't really thought about her end of it, except just at first—just when she told me, and for a little while after. I'm just an ordinary, selfish, self-centered dog."

"You're nothing of the kind, Frank. You've had a dreadful shock, and you're bewildered. Your mind is working in a selfish channel, but that's mere accident and incidental to the shock. I've suspected for some time that things were very wrong with Diana and you, so in my case shock has been discounted, and I'm not worrying too much about either of you. Don't you see that it doesn't really matter how much Diana is hurt? She has had her chance and she has abused it. And it doesn't really matter how much you are hurt. You are a man. As for Fenn, the more he is hurt the better. He will have only himself to thank. You three have been of age for a long time. You have been free agents. If you have made messes of your lives, you have only yourselves to blame. Diana has been too selfish. You have been too indulgent. And —let's not consider Fenn. Don't punish Diana, don't

make her suffer, but if she *will* suffer, why let her. And if you must suffer, why suffer—and get the most out of life that you can. But for heaven's sake, don't take the life of an innocent, helpless person, who has no say in the matter whatever, and rearrange that person's life for the worse. Both you and Diana are as necessary to Tam as the food she eats. No matter how much Diana suffers she will always be good to Tam, and good for Tam. It will always be the same with you. Don't argue this with Diana; she wouldn't see it now. But don't ever let it out of your mind. Stick to it. Even if Diana went completely wrong it would be better to keep her for Tam's sake."

"Every time I try to argue with her," said Manners dismally, "she threatens to run away with him. She says that if she is separated from him she will die or kill herself."

"Only the running away with him," said Mary Hastings comfortably, "need be considered seriously. And that mustn't be considered too seriously. Men will only consent to that way out when there is no other way out. Even bad men don't like the idea of running away with married women. They do it, of course; it does happen. But they don't like it. It amounts to being found out. They would much rather cheat and hope not to be found out."

"Fenn isn't a bad man," said Manners. "I've talked with him and I think he's a pretty decent sort. He told me I needn't be afraid of him. I try very hard not to be. I *know* they haven't cheated. I don't think they will. Has there been much talk?"

"More laughter than talk. Nobody knows Fenn, of

course, and the affair hasn't been taken very seriously. People are not laughing at Diana—yet; or at you, you poor soul. They think they are laughing with her. Only a very few people—real friends—have been worried; your cousin Peter, Mrs. Langham, of course . . ."

"Have you talked with her?" he interrupted. Mrs. Hastings nodded.

"She's a wonder!" he exclaimed. "She never mentioned it to me."

"She never does mention things that are mentioned to her. You've talked with her, of course?"

"And mighty glad I have. If you'll believe it, she's on my side. Who else knows?"

"My husband. He's a very good friend of yours."

"What did he say?"

"He didn't say much. He did things. He had Fenn looked up. He had him looked up here and all through the West in the different places where he has lived. But the man's record is negatively good. He's well thought of by the people who have known him and done business with him."

"You'll thank Alec for me, won't you? It was very white of him."

"It was no trouble. He has a mania for having people looked up. One night not long ago we had a small dinner-dance. And when everybody had gone he came up to me chuckling; and he told me that during the evening I had danced with seven men whom he could put in State's prison if he wanted to. He wouldn't tell me their names. Look here, Frank, I haven't talked with Diana. Shall I?"

"She's not to be talked to now, Mary. She isn't

sane. But you have my permission, if that's any use to anyone."

"Shall I talk to Fenn? I don't know him. But shall I meet him and talk to him?"

"That's a brave and bold and a new notion. What would you say?"

"That I had talked with you; that you refused to be divorced under any circumstances; that you refused to give up Tam. I'd try to show him that nothing honorable could ever come of the affair. I'd try to persuade him to duck out gradually, and not altogether gracefully."

"If we could be sure that he wouldn't run to Diana and repeat what you had said?"

"I should make reasonably sure about that before I gave anything away."

"If Diana finds out that I won't give her a divorce at any price . . ." He did not finish the sentence.

"She mustn't."

"Well," said Manners, "I wish you would see him. I've such tremendous faith in you. And talking with you has done me a world of good."

"I think," she said, "that Diana's fire is too intense to last. It will burn itself out. Don't take her too seriously. And don't take this wretched business too much to heart. Keep your mind on Tam. Think of her future. And don't be diverted from that by quixotic impulses."

"Of course," he said simply, and as if she had not been listening, "if they run away together I shall kill him."

"By all means," exclaimed Mrs. Hastings, and she

smiled into his face with such persistent sweetness that he had to smile back. "By all means kill him," she repeated, "and as he falls dead, and as Diana throws herself under the nearest trolley-car, and as the officer of the law lays his hands on your shoulder, and leads you away from your paints and your canvases and all your possible sources of revenue—think of Tam!"

He couldn't help laughing. Then he said: "Always right, Mary. I mustn't kill him, of course. But life hasn't been very gay with me lately, and you have no idea what fun it would be!"

She sighed when he had gone, and looked deep into the wonderful apple-tree that he had painted for her, and sat for a long time thinking.

"Frank and Diana," she thought, "have had five years of perfect happiness. No two people were ever so much in love with each other. Now they are both unhappier than I am, and I haven't even one minute's happiness to look back on."

Even this tragic thought did not disturb her look of brooding serenity, nor the sweetness of the smile which she had given Manners at parting and which still lingered about her mouth.

"Oh, my dear Apple-tree," she thought, "if only I had had Diana's chance!"

CHAPTER XI

She did not know whether she should bring the matter up with Diana. But she was determined to meet Fenn, and if he seemed an honorable man, who would not repeat what was said to Diana, to talk with him and try to influence him. It was not usually very difficult for her to influence men. And she knew it.

It would not be easy to meet Fenn, because they did not belong to the same station in life, but luck favored her. The night after Manners's departure for California she saw them at the play, and managed, when the performance was over, to so time her exit from the theater that it coincided with theirs.

Diana would have avoided the encounter if possible. She no longer felt comfortable when she was with Mary Hastings, and since the beginning of the affair with Fenn had deliberately kept away from her. Better than anyone else Diana knew the gallant fight that Mary Hastings had kept up to make a success out of a ghastly marriage. She admired no other woman so much. And there was no other person in the world whom she so hated to disappoint. But their greeting, unaffected and affectionate, left nothing to be desired. They met as intimate friends meet who have been seeing each other often.

Fenn was introduced. He was a little flustered. He had looked at her more than once during the progress

of the play and Diana had told him who she was. Fenn had as little of the snob in him as the next man, but the extraordinary beauty of the woman, and the hundred or two hundred millions of dollars which was said to be behind that beauty, had their effect. If only for Diana's sake he wished himself tall and of commanding presence. He wished that he had the gift of saying witty things in rather a loud and showy way. If only for Diana's sake he wished to make good with Diana's powerful friends. If only he could get them to like him for himself it would be so much better for Diana in the long run.

He knew that the heads of half the people in the lobby were turned toward Mrs. Hastings; that she was being pointed out and excitedly commented on. And he knew that because he was talking with such a famous person he was having a share in her conspicuousness. This knowledge inflamed his cheeks and tripped his tongue. He felt like an awkward fool. Diana herself could not have put him at his ease. And she had abandoned him. She was talking with Hastings. And Hastings was laughing his loud, harsh laugh. Only Mrs. Hastings herself could have put Fenn at his ease. And it was not so much she herself who managed it as the sheer loveliness that radiated from her eyes; and the sweetness and the serenity of her voice.

He forgot that rude, whispering people were staring at him; he forgot that he was humble and shy and self-conscious and unsuccessful. Almost he might have been alone in a forest contemplating some miraculous flower.

He heard Diana's voice: "Mr. Hastings wants us to go somewhere to supper with them," she said.

"I'd love to," said he.

And then almost without remembering how he got there he found himself surrounded by a most luxurious and delicate smell of leather. He was sitting next to the famous Alexander Hastings—one of the most envied and discussed men in America. They were riding backward. Opposite him was the woman who was all the world to him, next to her was the most beautiful woman in all the world. If only he could think of something to say!

"There's room on this seat, Mr. Fenn," said Mrs. Hastings, "if you hate riding backward."

His opportunity had come. He knew his Mark Twain inside out, and with a hint of a stammer in his speech he used that knowledge.

"I only hate it on the water," he said, "when it's my turn to row."

Hastings vented an appreciative roar of harsh laughter. The lovely women laughed, and Fenn, carried away with pleasure at having made a hit, laughed too. Diana's eyes fairly blazed with pride. How could anybody help liking a man who could say wonderful things like that?

It was less pleasant for her when Fenn, feeling that he had stolen another man's thunder, insisted on disavowing any credit for what he had said, and at some length and not very brilliantly retailed the witticism in its original form. The laughter which greeted this explanation and repetition was neither unrestrained nor spontaneous. And for the lack of humor thus dis-

played by her lover's insistence Diana was obliged to seek consolation in the beautiful intellectual honesty which had compelled it. No one was so modest. No one was so adamantine on questions of undeserved credit!

As for Mary Hastings, smiling very sweetly upon the unfortunate bungler, she thought to herself: "I wonder if he isn't ever a little mite tedious?"

And she was sorry for him. For when he looked at Diana his eyes had in them the adoration of a dog's, and she knew that neither to themselves nor to anybody else could any real good come of their love for each other.

"Did Fenn know that?" she wondered. "Did he even suspect it?"

During supper she made the discovery that Fenn was a great admirer of Chinese porcelains. The finer examples were of course beyond his means, but, other things being equal, he went where porcelains were. He had books on the subject. He was a genuine amateur. Nothing could have been more fortunate. The Hastings collection was so important that it had a whole room to itself. Fenn must have an afternoon with the collection, and the sooner the better. It would be easy to leave Diana out; she would indeed prefer to be left out, for collections of all kinds bored her.

The salaried expert who dusted the porcelains when he wasn't worshiping them should show them to Fenn. And then Fenn should have a cup of tea in her little sitting-room, and be talked to. The engagement was made. Fenn was flattered and delighted. Diana was also delighted. She suspected Mary Hastings of no

hidden motive. And when the afternoon for seeing the porcelains came she abandoned her lover to the more beautiful woman without a twinge of doubt.

When Mrs. Hastings joined Fenn in the room devoted to the porcelains, his interest in them waned, and he was glad to be led away to tea. It seemed wonderful to him to have been singled out for so much attention by so beautiful and famous a woman. He imagined that not everybody was privileged to see her alone in that charming little sitting-room. Diana must have such a room some day. The shyness natural to him was not in evidence. His face and eyes glowed with genuine pleasure. But only for a few moments; for Mrs. Hastings made a direct characteristic attack on the subject which was uppermost in her mind.

"Mr. Fenn," she said, "if you have no secrets from Diana I am going to give you a cup of tea and let you go. Otherwise I should like very much to have a frank talk with you."

"If you ask me not to say anything," said Fenn promptly, "of course I won't." His sense of ease and well-being had deserted him, and he felt a certain alarm.

"I've noticed for a long time," said Mrs. Hastings, "that Diana wasn't happy; so when her husband came on from California I inveigled him here—just as I have inveigled you, Mr. Fenn, and because we are very old friends, and because he trusts me, he told me the whole story. So far he does not attribute this calamitous situation to you. He has known Diana all his life, and if he puts the blame on her, most of their friends will believe that he is right."

"Does it matter how it happened, Mrs. Hastings?"

"No. But if it is allowed to go on, the blame of course will be shifted to you."

"Manners and I had a talk. Did he tell you? I must say it seemed to me that he didn't care a great deal what happened. He was extremely courteous, and —well, not a bit like what I had pictured."

"You having gathered from Diana," smiled Mrs. Hastings, "that his temper is violent, and his speech bitter and sarcastic. Probably you picture Diana as a wronged, ill-treated, misunderstood and desperately unhappy woman with her husband as the cause of it all. She has probably not told you so in words. She is too honest to tell absolute lies. But she has let you think so, and hence all the trouble."

"I don't know that I can agree to that."

"As a chivalrous man of course you can't. The point is that Diana hasn't the slightest excuse for doing what she is doing. No woman ever had a better husband. No girl ever had a better chance to be happy."

"Mrs. Hastings," said Fenn, with feeling, "I imagine that I must know Diana pretty well. For years her life has been miserable. Manners finds fault with her continuously; he is terribly sarcastic and bitter. I don't say that he is downright cruel, but with her tender and delicate sensibilities——"

"I daresay he is all those things," Mrs. Hastings interrupted. "And why? Because Diana *will* go her own selfish way, no matter who is hurt. Very naturally he objects, and there are scenes. That isn't cruelty. That is the direct result of a wife behaving as no wife should. There is no use denying this and trying

to stick up for Diana. You yourself can at least testify on one flagrant example of her unwifeliness. Yet if he speaks one word against her affair with you she sobs and cries, and runs to you to tell you how her husband maltreats her. My dear Mr. Fenn, you proved to us the other night that you have a sense of humor; fall back on it. It is a sword and buckler. Most of us think that Frank Manners is about the best husband we know, and that he has had a terrible lot of extravagance, both financial and moral, to put up with. No one who knows them, for instance, will take sides with her, and defend her, if this flirtation with you ever becomes common knowledge. Their intimates, including Diana's mother, will feel nothing but pity and sympathy for him, and nothing but contempt for her."

"Why does he want to keep her," Fenn asked, not without point, "if she is such an unsatisfactory wife?"

"For one reason," said Mrs. Hastings, "he has loved her ever since she was a little girl. He still loves her. I shouldn't wonder if his love for her was a finer thing even than yours, Mr. Fenn."

"To me," said Fenn, "there is a certain grossness in clinging to a woman who no longer loves one."

"There are other reasons," said Mrs. Hastings, but her voice momentarily had lost something of its habitual sweetness. "Diana with all her faults is a good mother. It would be criminal to separate Tam from her."

"I imagine," said Fenn, "that the courts would give the custody of the child to the mother. That is very usual."

"It would be equally criminal to separate Tam from her father."

"There could be an arrangement by which each could have her part of the time—say fifty-fifty."

In justice such an arrangement really seemed eminently fair and proper to Fenn. He was not pretending anything to serve his needs. Having no children, he knew nothing about them.

"Between Tam and her father," said Mrs. Hastings, "there is a peculiarly beautiful relationship. It wouldn't do to separate them. But we needn't go into that. Diana has an idea that her husband will give her a divorce. He actually made some such proposition. It was conditional on her not seeing you or communicating with you for a year. He wished to test the strength and lasting qualities of her affection for you. But this proposition—fair and just to all concerned and calling upon Diana merely for a little self-denial—was rejected with stormy sobs and threats of suicide. Mr. Fenn, I speak for the husband when I tell you that all tentative propositions of divorce have been withdrawn. Just before he started back for California, Manners consulted his lawyers and telephoned me the result. There are no legal difficulties. Diana cannot divorce Manners to save her soul if he opposes the suit. He has been faithful to her, he has supported her, he has been far more tolerant and far more kind to her than her deserts have always warranted. On the advice of Diana's own mother he has decided that he will not give Diana a divorce—that he will not divorce her under any circumstances. In the face of that, Mr.

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Fenn, I should like to know just what it is that you have to offer her?"

"But I understood that he would do anything for her happiness, that he would let her divorce him?"

"He will consider Tam's welfare and happiness first. So what can you offer Diana?"

"There is such a thing," said Fenn slowly, "as people when they love each other and are driven to desperation . . ."

"You are thinking of Diana's happiness? You can only offer her scandal and dishonor. And of course Manners would shoot you. If he failed, she has two brothers, who also believe in old-fashioned things like virtue and honor. That *will* make Diana happy."

She said this so gently and good-humoredly that Fenn was not very much impressed. He smiled.

"I don't take much stock in shooting talk," he said. "Somehow people don't shoot in—in our station in life."

"*Our* station!" she exclaimed. "My dear Mr. Fenn! We have no station assigned to us. If our actions are low, our stations are low. If our actions are high-minded, just, temperate, and unselfish, we occupy high stations. But nobody will believe that you love Diana or care about her happiness if you do anything dishonorable. I wish I could see into your mind. I wish I knew just how much you really want to go on with this, and just how much you feel that you must, how much you feel that you are bound in honor to go on until Diana herself says stop."

"I am bound in all honor to go on until Diana herself says stop." In saying this Fenn actually glowed

with a sense of virtue and chivalry. He really felt that to stick to the woman who loved him, trusted him, and needed him was the highest duty in his life.

"You don't know how her character has changed in these last months," he said earnestly.

The corner of Mrs. Hastings's mouth puckered, as also certain fine lines that met at the outer corners of her eyes. Her eyes sparkled.

"I'm sure her character *has* changed," she said, and Fenn knew that she was laughing at him. "Formerly," she exclaimed, "Diana was a model wife, and a model mother and a faithful friend. She thought only of the happiness of those around her. When you say that her character has changed you are perfectly right. And that change is of course owing to your splendid influence, Mr. Ogden Fenn. Since knowing you Diana has stabbed her faithful husband in the back, she has been false to solemn vows. Self-indulgence and injustice to others now distinguish her from her former self."

All the quizzicalness and smilingness went out of her face.

"I meant that theoretically a wife's place is with her husband and her children. But I reserved the right to believe that there are exceptions to the rule. And I believe that Diana—she is so high-strung, Mrs. Hastings, so fragile, so sensitive—is one of those exceptions. The soil in which she grows must be congenial to her. She cannot live and bloom with a man she does not love."

"Have you thought how swiftly and desperately she will fade when the realization of all that she has lost

comes home to her, and at the same time she has fallen out of love with you?"

"I am as sure of her love for me as I am sure of my love for her. I can't make you understand, of course, but somehow it isn't the usual thing; it's different."

Mrs. Hastings laughed, but there was no mirth in her heart.

"I have run my silly head into a stone wall," she said. "I hoped to make you see things as I see them. I hoped, since nothing but dishonor can come by prolonging the affair, that you would see the beauty of putting an end to it."

She rose with a certain droop in her shoulders that suggested weariness, and although she did not hold out her hand, Fenn felt that he was being dismissed. He felt that in their conversation he had not come off second best. He had stuck tight to Diana; he always would. Just as she would always stick tight to him.

"Diana;" said Mrs. Hastings, "is to blame for starting this. You are to blame for keeping it up. People are beginning to talk—to couple your names. Her reputation is hurt. You may succeed in ruining it. According to law, Manners has ample grounds upon which to divorce Diana. She has no ground on which to divorce him. Her conduct is outrageous, without pity or justice. It may be that her husband's love for her will change into contempt. In that event, he will think only of justice, and I shouldn't care to be in your shoes, Mr. Fenn."

"I am not easily frightened, Mrs. Hastings."

And he was not in the least frightened; that Manners, who had been so gentle and courteous, should

ever be possessed by a homicidal mania was inconceivable to him; as inconceivable as that he himself, on crossing the avenue, after leaving Mrs. Hastings, should be run over and killed. And to the statement that he was not easily frightened he added: "I am only afraid of my own failings and shortcomings. Of nothing else, certainly not of the sort of jealous husband who occurs only in romantic novels and on the lower East Side."

When Fenn had gone, after reassuring her that he would not mention the subject of their conversation to Diana, Mary Hastings sat down at her writing-table and began a letter to Manners.

CHAPTER XII

From talking with his mother-in-law, and with Mary Hastings, Manners had derived a certain comfort. And his belief that Diana, while she still imagined that a divorce could be arranged, would not cast away the last shreds of honor, was firm. Still he had believed that going back to California at such a crisis in his life would be the very last turn of the screw. But in this he was mistaken. Every mile that further separated him from New York and Old Westbury seemed to add something to his power of mental detachment. And for the first time the thought that life without Diana might be possible presented itself. He encouraged this thought, and played with it by the hour.

But in the various lives which he pictured himself as leading after Diana should leave him, one premise remained constant. The separation must be absolute. There must be no meetings deliberate or accidental to disquiet him and make his heart beat. All communications between them must be through their lawyers. Nor would he consent to paying her a penny of alimony. She liked everything about Fenn, therefore she liked Fenn's poverty. Let her have her selfish way, and make the best of it.

If it had not been for Diana's extravagance Manners would have been well-off. If Diana, for instance, had been content to live for a few years in the little house

which he had built for her, if she had been willing to have more than one child, and for the sake of those children to sacrifice her own restless desires! Refusing to bear children had been her great failure. There could be no doubt of that. Here his plans for the future slipped off into recollections of the past.

At one period during the thirty years of her life Diana had almost touched perfection. To think of the happy, peaceful months preceding Tam's birth was to think of Madonnas and Annunciations. Diana had been serene, blissful and exalted. She had neared perfection. And in the months following Tam's birth it seemed to Manners that Diana had actually reached perfection. She had watched over the child as a lover watches over his beloved. She had dropped completely out of the world that knew her, and she had wept bitterly when at the end of six months it had been decided that she ought not to nurse her baby any more.

Diana had fallen out of love with her husband for the simple reason that she refused to have children by him. It was as if Nature had said: "Here is this man Manners, who might do a great deal for us, but who doesn't. We live with him; we even sleep with him; but he will not give us even that tiny, and to him valueless and superfluous, microörganism which we ask of him. Therefore we repudiate him."

So Nature, not Diana, turned from Manners, and fastened on What's-his-name. What's-his-name having been sent about his business, Nature, and not Diana, had turned to Fenn.

Manners was beginning to see these things clearly. Nature, he decided, has no use for a man when he

ceases to be a potential father. But if Diana married Fenn would she have children? She had told him once, but in a storm of anger and despair, that she would have as many as Fenn wanted; but Manners, knowing her acute hatred and fear of pain, had not believed her. "She will put the first one off," he had thought at the time, "until they are well settled, until Fenn is more prosperous, and then, being no longer in the first glad raptures over Fenn, she will renig." He felt very sure of this.

Like Diana he had always been careless about money, and extravagant by fits and starts. But it was not his fault that the income which he earned had never been quite enough to live on. Diana was to blame for that. Manners now began to contemplate, not without a certain pleasurable sense of righteousness, a life in which, freed from the economic pressure which Diana exerted, there should be more work, less play, and far, far less expenditure. He and Tam, or Tam when he had her, should live in a small house in a very simple way. He would accept more commissions than ever before; he would paint more hours than ever before. Friends, men like Hastings, would tell him what to do with his spare cash. They had always been willing to do this he knew; but the spare cash had always been lacking. When it came time to present Tam to society there was no reason why he should not be really well-off. He would take a big house then, with big rooms in which he could entertain for her. Tam must have beautiful clothes, and lots of them. Tam must have lots of pocket-money; horses to ride and motors to drive. All this achievement lay within

reach of his talent and productive power. He had only to be industrious and unselfish.

"If Diana," he thought, "puts herself ahead of her duty to Tam; if she does this cruel, unjust and uncalled-for thing to me—all right. But she would be ashamed to accept anything from me afterward. I know that. I'll give her that credit."

But there was one thing which kept removing that new simple life with Tam, or a good deal with Tam, from the realms of the possible. How could he live through the period of transition? How could he live through the day when he learned, from a newspaper, perhaps, that Diana had been married to Fenn? How could he live through the night? How could he live when all that sweetness that had been his Eden was being explored for the delectation of another man?—a man who alienated affections, who broke up families, who stabbed in the back! Such thoughts were like descents into hell. Sometimes he asked himself this question:

"I love her more than anything in this world: Do I hope that she will be happy with Fenn?"

To this question his mind returned a conventional answer. Of *course* he wanted her to be happy, whatever she did. But he didn't. He was a human being, and of course he didn't.

The promise of an early spring in California was very definite; and the gradual descent from the snows of the Sierras to the emphatic greens of the Sacramento Valley ravished Manners's senses in spite of the canker that ate at his heart. If a man's record in a place has been marked by honesty and friendliness his

return to that place must always be a pleasant event in his life. So it proved with Manners. Men whom he had thought of during his absence as mere acquaintances seemed by some mysterious alchemy to have been transformed into friends. He had hated the San Francisco wind. He no longer hated it. It was a young, adventurous wind. It blew the streets full of Romance. It stimulated him like wine. On every hand he was greeted with affection. Even Mrs. Appleyard had forgiven him for abandoning her dining-room. She showed a disposition to flirt with him.

Then in addition, as if by a miraculous and perhaps pitying dispensation of Providence, a charming and ingenious scheme for decorating the end of the dining-room that had the two doors presented itself and in a day or two he was up to his ears in work. Work acted upon him like a strong tonic. He began to eat well, and to sleep well, and to enjoy the society of agreeable men and pretty women. Mrs. Appleyard's forgiveness was complete; for she saw that her famous dining-room was actually going to benefit from that inconsiderate trip of Manners to New York. She said that he was unlike other artists. She said that he had a conscience. She sung his praises far and wide and loud and high.

Health returned to him, and with it the power to admire, to enjoy, and to see clearly. "I am not the only husband," he thought, "who has been stabbed in the back." It fortified him to think that he had a whole legion of unknown comrades in misfortune. With equal clearness he now saw that which had been self-evident to Mary Hastings: that in the settlement

of their family affairs neither he nor Diana must be allowed to count too much. Little Tam was the great personage. She, whose only argument was the mere fact of her existence, must be given the first place. And obviously it was better for Tam to grow up with a father and mother who loved her, and whom she loved, than with that mother and a stepfather, or with that father and a governess.

Mary Hastings's letter in which she described her interview with Fenn and her impressions of Fenn disquieted him; but not too much. He believed that he could scare off Fenn; he believed that, if he went very calmly and kindly about it, he could make Diana see reason. It was easy to make Diana see reason when she wasn't present, when she was three thousand miles away.

So he stopped torturing himself with the thought that he might have to go through life without her, and some weeks before he actually returned to New York had decided in every detail what he should do and say when he got there. Almost he may be said to have rehearsed his second home-coming. He would tell Diana, very patiently and gently (and nothing that she said or threatened should divert him from this same gentleness and patience) that he would not allow her to divorce him and that under no circumstances would he divorce her. He would sympathize with her hurt. He would by no means (heaven forbid) tell her that she had only herself to blame. And he would tell her that she must sacrifice her personal feelings for the good of others and not see Fenn any more. He would point out to her that keeping on with Fenn could end

only in scandal and disaster. And he would be so kind and gentle that she could not but see the thing as he saw it. And every day he wrote her an affectionate letter in which he touched on none of those disagreeable issues which had risen between them.

He left California with genuine regret. He would always be grateful to California and the Californians. They had drawn the soreness out of him, and taught him to think in a new way. He had learned to look at himself and Diana as from a great distance. He thus saw two diminutive creatures whose feelings and passions were of no more importance to the world at large than the peregrinations of two ants in the grass. Only Tam mattered. She must grow up with a strong belief in the unity of families and the obligations of marriage. In order that later on her own choices of conduct might be wise and honorable she must have in her forming years a mother to turn to as well as a father. She must grow up, if not in a real home, at least in the best imitation of one which could be achieved by good breeding and good manners. Her forming mind must not be puzzled and then distressed by domestic problems.

He journeyed, then, eastward in good health and spirits, with money in the bank, and the knowledge that if he ever returned to California he could have as many commissions for decorations and portraits as he cared to accept.

The idea of returning to California almost at once with Tam and Diana appealed to him. He had even looked through a few houses that were for rent. A new background to set off new faces would be very

good for Diana. Those occasional disquieting earaches which afflicted Tam would disappear entirely in the dry, bright California climate. He imagined himself saying "So that's all settled, dear. You are doing the right thing. Now how about Burlingame for the summer and fall? All the people out there will simply love you, and you'll have the time of your life." He pictured the zest for novelty overcoming in Diana's expression, the mournful, persecuted look incident to having seen Mr. Ogden Fenn for the last time. "Why," thought Manners, "give her three months of Burlingame, with something doing all round the clock, and she'll have forgotten what he looked like. I know it."

Unfortunately for these comforting dreams the Diana who met him in the Grand Central Station (he had telegraphed this time) was not an insignificant ant whose peregrinations were of no importance. Instead of that she was his wife, beautiful, beloved, self-willed, and still determined to wreck his home and to hurt their little daughter's chances. She was in good fighting trim. She had never looked younger, or more wistfully beautiful, or more exquisitely untouched by time. She looked nearer twenty than thirty. She no longer controlled her nerves by an effort of will. They controlled themselves, and Manners soon was to learn that she had built up their renewal of nervous and physical force upon a false hypothesis. She had clung all along, it seemed, to those vague promises of divorce which had been torn from him in a moment of pitying and almost hysterical chivalry; to his statement that he would think of nothing but her happiness; to

her belief that men like her husband always kept their word.

Now in justice to Manners it must be remembered that he had not promised her a divorce. He had merely accepted the idea of one. And he had accepted that idea without consulting Tam. Furthermore, to work solely for Diana's happiness was not necessarily to let her have her own way. But she took it for granted (or appeared to) that there was to be a divorce, and that she was to have her own way about everything. They drove at once to the Pennsylvania Station, and she told him without wasting any time that Fenn had consulted a lawyer, and that, take them for all in all, the laws of Maine offered the best and least conspicuous untangling of their marriage knot. A residence could be established in a year. She had written to Bar Harbor about cottages. A year was a long time to wait. But she would be very brave about that. And besides, she would be able to see Fenn now and then—not often, but now and then. Laws were funny things. If you were going to marry a man—were, in fact, getting your divorce for no other reason than to marry him—it seemed ridiculous not to see him every day if you wanted to. The laws were silly and old-maidish; but she supposed they had to be obeyed. And she added with the most disarming naïveté, "Apparently the real reason why I want a divorce doesn't count at all."

Manners listened to her in amazement. His intention to tell her calmly and kindly that there was to be no divorce became less resolute. It would lead him

instantaneously into a most unpleasant scene. He would be accused of saying things that weren't true, and of making promises that he had not intended to keep. So he compromised and procrastinated.

"Let's not thrash it *all* out now," he said. "I've had four days and nights in the train; and I'm not up on the Maine laws, though I did think that desertion took more than a year."

"Desertion does," she said glibly; "ever so much longer, several years. So of course that's out of the question."

"You told me once that you wouldn't think of divorcing me on any other ground."

"Did I? I suppose I did, if you say so. But I didn't know anything about the law then. And besides, what difference does it make if I've got to sue on grounds that don't exist anyway?"

"What grounds has Fenn's lawyer advised?"

Diana answered without hesitation, but with a note of embarrassment, if not of actual shame, in her voice:

"Why, cruelty and that sort of thing," she said hurriedly.

"Cruelty and that sort of thing," repeated Manners. And except to ask if he must buy two tickets or only one he did not speak to her again until they were in the train. He felt that his heart was hardening against her. It would not be possible to state whether his strongest feeling toward her now was love or contempt. She was willing, so great was her selfishness, and so cruel her callousness, to go before a judge and swear that he—he, Francis Manners—had been cruel to her, and that sort of thing!

Oh, Diana!

The next day Diana went to town by an early train. She seemed to take it for granted that her goings and comings were no longer to be questioned. She did not say why she was going, or what she was going to do, or by what train she would return to the country.

"I have stopped asking questions," said Mrs. Langham. "She knows that I know what is in the air; but she hasn't said a word to me about it, and I haven't said a word to her. Indeed, we don't see much of her out here."

"I suppose not," said Manners, and he added grimly: "They have arranged everything. Maine is the chosen State. I am to be divorced for cruelty and that sort of thing." Then he laughed and added: "I haven't told her," he said, "that I am not to be divorced at all. I shall tell her to-night or to-morrow. My nerves are in good shape, and I shall manage to keep my temper. If I had only myself to consider I'd let her go. But every day I have felt more and more strongly that the only person to consider is Tam."

Late that afternoon Diana telephoned that she was dining at the apartment, and she added with unnecessary bravado, Manners thought, that Fenn was to dine with her. "But we are having an early dinner," she added, "and I'll be home before ten."

Except to himself Manners made no comment. Diana's voice over the telephone had the joyousness of one whose day has been well-spent. He made this comment to himself, and more in amazement than in bitterness: "She's crazy! I wonder why she still speaks of this place as *home?*"

After dinner Manners and his mother-in-law sat in the library before a bright fire and pretended to read. Several times Manners ran lightly up the stairs to look into the room where his little daughter slept. So a general about to commit his army to battle looks over the reserves upon which he may count in case of an initial disaster. In dealing with Diana he would need strength and stamina, and the continuous reassurance that his cause was just. He was going to hurt Diana horribly. From time to time he looked at his watch. If the train was not late Diana should reach the house at about a quarter before ten.

Mrs. Langham always seemed to have an instinctive knowledge of time. At half-past nine she closed her book, and veiled an incipient yawn. Then she rose, and stood for a few moments with her back to the fire. "I sha'n't sit up for Diana," she said. "Shall you tell her to-night?"

Manners walked to the foot of the stair with Mrs. Langham.

"I'd better tell her to-night," he said. "I don't think that I could possibly sleep on the 'cruelty and that sort of thing.'"

"Frank," said Mrs. Langham, "there's a hard time ahead for you—for all of us. Don't let anything that Diana says or does hurt your love for her. Your whole future, yours and hers, is founded on that. She has treated you so outrageously that sometimes I am afraid that your love may change suddenly into something else."

"I couldn't ever stop loving Diana," said Manners simply, "but my love has been so snubbed, abused and

brow-beaten that it has become almost inarticulate. Sometimes it seems to me that it is buried under contempt. But it's always there; always ready to jump to its feet, and to forgive. Don't be afraid."

She turned and went slowly up the stairs. From the landing she smiled to him and waved her hand.

He opened the front door and stood in the cold night air listening for the sounds of wheels on the gravel. He looked at his watch. A quarter before ten. If she had found a motor at the station she should be here now; but if there was nothing to lift her home but a broken-down hack drawn by a broken-down horse he must have patience. And then of course that particular train stopped at every station and was almost always late.

Manners was not the only listener in the house. Upstairs at a window which she had opened Mrs. Langham was also listening. She had developed with relation to her son-in-law a peculiar intuitive sympathy, by which she was sometimes enabled to penetrate his varying moods, and even to follow for a time his trains of thought. And she knew that to-night his mood was dangerous. He did not know this himself. He imagined that his nerves and mind were under perfect control.

Mrs. Langham heard the sound of the front door closing. Usually Manners, who was considerate of other people, and very strong in the hands, dealt gently with doors, and though the sound which Mrs. Langham had heard was not exactly a slam, it was deliberately emphatic; and she knew as well as if he had told her that the melancholy patience which her son-in-law

had exhibited during the evening was changing into something else. She closed her window quietly, and stepping into the upper hall, leaned over the guard-rail, and called to him:

"This train is nearly always late," she said.

"I know it is."

He said no more. Nor did she. But she stood listening. He was pacing the hall and the library with long, nervous strides. Suddenly he went to the telephone, asked Central for the correct time, and set his watch by it. Then he resumed his caged walk. Then he once more opened the front door and listened. The cold night air rushed into the house and up the stair. Mrs. Langham could feel it on her ankles. He closed the door presently, and once more attempted to derive an explanation of Diana's lateness from the telephone. He tried to get into connection with the station-master at Westbury, but without success.

He was no longer impatient with Diana for being late; he was growing anxious for her safety. He thought of trains which roll over embankments; of head-on collisions, of passenger coaches that crumple up like accordions, of railroad fires in which women and children are burned to death.

He gave the number of the apartment to the telephone operator; but she told him after a long delay, during which he lost his temper and asked to be connected with the manager, that the number did not answer.

Mrs. Langham had withdrawn into her room; but she had not closed the door. She heard the sound of Manners's feet on the stair. When he was half-way

up he perceived that her door was open, and, raising his voice a trifle:

"Do you think anything can have happened?" he asked.

Mrs. Langham came out of her room and resting one hand on the guard-rail smiled down at him.

"No," she said with a cheerful crispness that brought an answering smile to his face, "I don't think anything can have happened."

"If she'd missed the train," he said, "she would have telephoned. I'm afraid something may have happened to the train." Mrs. Langham shook her head.

"Nothing ever does happen to that particular train," she said. "Lots of people wish that something would happen to it. It's a disreputable sluggard, and it has trouble with its wheels."

"How do you mean?"

"Why sometimes," she said, "usually even—they don't go round fast enough!"

She had succeeded in making him laugh. He wished her good-night again and, turning, descended the stair. "What a brick she is," he thought. "She's just as much worried as I am; but she's too well-bred to show it."

And in fact Mrs. Langham's worry was as great as his own. But she was not in the least worried about the train, or the safety of Diana's person. She was worried about Manners. It does not do for a wife to be too cavalier with her wronged husband. And most surely Diana had spent an exceedingly cavalier day. That she was late was not her fault; but it was a fact of which she would probably make light. When Man-

ners told her that he had been worried to death about her she would very likely tell him that he ought not to be so childish. Neither of them would be in a mood to discuss the ultimatum which she knew that Manners had determined to deliver that night.

Once more she opened her window and listened intently. This time she heard the rattling and gasping of a motor-car that might well have been one of the station cars, but it did not turn in at their gate. Manners had also opened the front door to listen to the passing of the noisy bolt-worn machine. He had stepped off the door-step and stood in the middle of the drive. Impatience had changed in his heart to anxiety. And anxiety, with a sudden shiver that shook him from head to foot, had changed to fear. And his heart like a telegraphic transmitter was beating this message into his brain:

"She isn't *late!* She's not *coming!* She's not coming by this train or any other! The fool! The idiot! She couldn't wait! She's bolted with him!"

He rushed into the house, leaving the front door wide open, and up the stair to his room.

Mrs. Langham stood just without his door. It took courage to knock. She knocked. He did not answer, and with a sudden agony of foreboding she pushed the door open.

Manners had kicked off his pumps, and was lacing on a pair of shoes. He looked up when the door opened. His face was ghastly white.

"I don't believe she is coming," he said. "I am going to look for them. There is a train at eleven. I can catch it if I run all the way."

He bent once more over the knotting of his shoelaces, and when this was finished leapt to his feet. The heavy automatic pistol on the table at the head of his bed caught his eye, and he reached out his hand for it.

Mrs. Langham's heart was beating so fast that it caused her real distress. Nevertheless she managed to emit speech that was matter-of-fact and sensible.

"I'll find a bite of something for you to eat on the way," she said; "you'll need it."

And she turned quickly and with the real intention of darting off upon this practical and anti-climactical errand; but mingled with the night air that came rushing into the house through the door-way that Manners had left open were the sounds of gravel being crunched under wheels and of a horse's hoofs.

"There's Diana now!" said Mrs. Langham.

Manners's fingers, which had closed on the stock of the automatic, loosened. And a moment later he was darting down the stair, his face all brightened with relief and with lovingness.

The lateness of her train had vexed Diana as much as anyone else. The relief and lovingness in her husband's face were lost upon her.

"Who left the door open?" she asked, with irritation. "The house is like a barn."

"Keep your coat on," said Manners, "and come into the library. There's a fine fire."

"Has mamma gone to bed?"

"She's retired," said Manners, which was true.

He followed her into the library. She turned her back to the fire, and stood finely poised. Presently

her husband's feet caught her eye, and she broke into a laugh.

"Look at you!" she exclaimed. "Brown boots with dinner clothes!"

"I was starting for town to look for you," he said gravely. "I thought you weren't coming."

"What nonsense!"

"It may have been nonsense to think," said Manners, "but it wasn't nonsense to feel. It was horrible."

"Well," she smiled, but not in real sympathy with the horribleness he had experienced, "here I am, safe and sound. And in about two minutes I'm going to bed."

"I've something important to say to you first."

Diana sighed. Except for the infernal pokiness of the train it had been a day of glory. And she wished to go to bed with her memories of that gloriousness undimmed.

"I'd rather hear it to-morrow morning," she said. "I'm a little tired."

"What have you been doing to make yourself tired?"

"I motored most of the time. I've been all the way up to Combers."

"Combers?"

"It's in the Catskills. It's a wonderful little mountain village. So wild and picturesque, and miles and miles from any railway. Ogden has a tiny little house up there. He used often to take a friend up for over Sunday, and they'd climb mountains and have wonderful talks. Such hills! You never saw such hills. We had a dandy little car that Ogden borrowed from Alfred Hicks—I don't think you know him; but two

hills were so steep that I didn't think we'd ever make them. I had to drive because Ogden has never had motors and things."

Manners assumed a cheerful interest which he did not feel; though he was indeed partially disarmed by her frankness and naturalness and by the happy look in her eyes.

"House nice?" he asked.

"It's the dearest house!" she exclaimed, "all on a tiny scale, of course; two bedrooms, and the rest to match. And nobody within miles and miles to bother you. Ogden has the dearest old caretaker with the youngest, bluest eyes! We had delicious fried chicken and popovers for lunch. And the house was as spick and span as a new coin. Ogden thought I'd find lots and lots of things that would have to be changed—that was why we went; but I didn't. We could move in to-morrow."

All unconscious of the pain that she was causing him she talked on and on. She described the house, room by room; its wonderful location among hills and forests. Of course the spring was very late 'way up there; but there was a distinct shimmer of green over the trees. And then suddenly she realized how all that she was saying must hurt her husband. She had the impulse to reproach herself, to beg for forgiveness, and in kneeling in the spirit, as it were, to crave his mercy and his permission to keep on in the pursuit of that course which she told herself she could by no means help pursuing. But the impulse came to nothing. She simply could not say such things. She could only feel them. So she stopped talking; and drumming

with one hand on the mantelpiece looked shyly into her husband's face and waited for him to speak.

"It seems to have been a wonderful day," he said presently, "blue and without clouds. Perhaps that's a good thing. Perhaps it will be a help to have such a day to look back on. God knows I don't begrudge it to you. Will you come and sit down by me? It's hard for me to say to you what I have to."

She sat down beside him on the sofa which in winter was placed quite close to the fireplace. But she did not lean back against the cushions. All her defensive instincts had taken alarm. Manners spoke slowly, and with the most painstaking gentleness.

"Our problem," he said, "has never been out of my mind, even when I was working hardest. At first I jumped about from one solution to another. Sometimes I'd rest on the true solution for a while only to abandon it. But at last, quite a long time ago now, I came to rest on the true solution and stayed there."

Diana was frightened. But from the tone of her voice he judged that she was merely impatient.

"Well," she said, "what is the true solution?"

"First," he said, "you must believe that I have no selfish motives in the decision I have come to. You mustn't think of me as a man who because of his love for her intends to keep prisoner a woman who wishes to be free. And the proof is this, Diana: Even in my own heart I no longer think of you as my wife. If the problem concerned only you and me, you should go free as soon as freedom could be arranged for you. But the problem concerns you and me so little that we mustn't consider ourselves, any more than outsiders,

impartial judges, would consider us. The problem concerns Tam so much that it hardly concerns anyone else at all. You have forced me to give you up, and that is a profound grief to me, but for Tam's sake I have found strength to take the gaff. For Tam's sake, my dear, for she needs us both, you must find the strength to do what you have forced me to do. You must make your big sacrifice, and give up Fenn."

She made no answer. She was leaning forward now, her chin in her hands, staring into the dying fire. She seemed to have listened. She appeared to be reflecting. He thought that he had made an impression on her.

"In time, my dear," he said, "all this great storm of feeling will blow away. That is what I think. But I am not sure. Maybe you will never stop caring. But a time will surely come when you will be glad that you made this great renunciation for the sake of a helpless little child, of a little child who depends on you, who is destined to be made or unmade by the quality of our love for her." She said nothing.

"Diana, darling," he said, "I have only love and forgiveness for you." Now she spoke in a low tense voice:

"I don't see how you can bear the thought of keeping me if I don't want to stay."

"I don't want to keep you against your will. But for Tam's sake I must keep you."

"You put it all on Tam. And that is just a pretense."

"It is not, Diana."

"Oh, it enters in! I know that. But you want to

keep me because you want to keep me, and that is all there is to it."

Neither of them spoke for a full minute. The unreasonableness and injustice against which she forced him to contend, the frantic state of anxiety and then of homicidal rage into which her innocent lateness had thrown him, the unintentionally cruel account of the blissful day which she had spent with Fenn, were rapidly breaking down the bulwark of toleration and gentleness which he had erected against just such assailants.

"Make what you like of my motive," he said, "call it unadulterated selfishness if that gives you satisfaction. You have piled so much injustice on me that I can stand up under a little more. Whatever my motive is, my decision is fixed and irrevocable. I will neither give you a divorce nor divorce you. My lawyer tells me that any judge to whom you carried no worse complaints than you have to make of me would give you such a dressing-down as you would never forget. In the eyes of the law you are a spoiled, wilful, pampered woman suffering from an acute attack of guilty affection. There are only two courses open to you. One is to do right and to throw off this man's evil and pernicious influence. The other is to add to the wrong done a wrong still greater, and to precipitate scandal and disaster." His eyes had an angry glare in them.

"If you and Fenn cheat me," he said, his voice vibrant and ugly, "I will kill him. If you run away with him I will track you down and kill him." She rose abruptly and her eyes, too, glared angrily. "Do you imagine that Ogden Fenn is afraid of you?" she

said. And the question was at once an insult and a sneer.

Rage possessed Manners. If the primitive man had been stronger in him, and the accumulated civilization weaker, he would have struck her, and kept on striking her until she was insensible. It is possible that if he had done this the stream of their lives might have been turned aside from the tragic channel into which it was ever plunging more swiftly and more deeply. But it was only in his imagination that he struck her, and it was only in hers that she felt the blow. Manners set his teeth tight together.

"If he isn't afraid of me," he said, "he's a fool!"

Her beautiful little head went up proudly; and her eyes were bright and glorious with love for the man whom she defended.

"Kill us both!" she said. "What do we care? . . . We shall have lived!"

She was gorgeous in her challenge and in her defiance.

Late that night she knocked on the door between their rooms. He was not asleep.

"Frank," she said, her voice practical and business-like, but neither cold nor unkind, "is your decision really fixed and irrevocable?"

"Yes, Diana. Why?"

"Because I have to know. Good-night."

Toward morning when he had exhausted every mental emotion of which he was capable he fell into a heavy sleep. He did not wake till ten o'clock. Mrs. Langham had told the servants not to call him.

"He'd simply learn a little sooner," she thought,

"that Diana has gone to town by the early train. That sort of knowledge keeps splendidly. He's best asleep."

But if she had known that before she went to ner train Diana had tiptoed into his room and stood for a long time looking at him; if she had known that a lump had risen in Diana's throat when she saw how gray he was getting, and if she had known that Diana had left a note on the table at the head of his bed, and that in that note she had said that since his decision was fixed and irrevocable she was going away with Fenn, and praying him not to hurt the man she loved, but to let them find such happiness as might be possible for them—why, then, of course, Mrs. Langham would have had him called.

CHAPTER XIII

To her mother, Diana had shown at parting a placid and matter-of-fact mood. She had even found time to romp a little with Tam. There was nothing to distinguish this particular departure of hers from any other. She left the house as if her return to it was a mere matter of course.

Manners was more affected by the sight of the envelope containing Diana's note than by his perusal of the note itself. The envelope, addressed in his wife's bold, swift writing, and propped against the stem of his reading-lamp, had an ominous and fatal look. It suggested things which have to be written because people cannot find the courage to say them. "Look within," it seemed to say, "if you dare; for I have that within me which is worse than anything you have yet known." His soul leapt to the conclusion that the worst had happened. So that it was with a feeling of relief that he read the note and learned, not that the worst had happened, but—and herein lay a crumb of hope—that the worst had been determined on and was going to happen.

Somewhat to his own surprise he did not begin to rave and foam at the mouth. He felt no new sense of outrage and injustice. Instead it seemed to him as if some horribly involved knot which he had long struggled to untie had been cut, and that he was at

last free to act. He need no longer play the brooding, introspective, irresolute *rôle* of a modern *Hamlet.* Now at last he was free to play the man; to stamp the foot and draw the sword!

It was no longer a turgid and muddied current that fed his brain; but a stream clear, lucid and bright. His fighting-blood was rising. And he saw at once that the fight before him was not to destroy or to avenge, but to save. He knew at last how dear Diana's good name was to him, and how invaluable to her. He would save that for her in the teeth of a whole regiment of Fenns.

He had intended to say nothing to Mrs. Langham. Unfortunately, just before he left the house, he was called to the telephone, and Mrs. Langham, who happened to be in the hall, overheard some sentences of a short conversation which he had with Mary Hastings. She had asked him to dine with them that night and to go to the play. And he had forgotten to answer the invitation. She now wanted to know if he would come or if he would not. He apologized emphatically for his rudeness in not answering. And then, as an excuse for not accepting, he heard himself saying (to his own amazement, for the thought had been born suddenly at the telephone together with a whole train of action that went with it), "Ogden Fenn is very anxious to show Diana his little house near Combers in the Catskills. She can't very well go alone, and so we are all three going up for the night. What do you think of that?" His voice was gay and cheerful. The good red fighting-blood was not only in his brain but it was in his larynx.

These were the sentences which Mrs. Langham had accidentally overheard. Ordinarily she would have suppressed every sign that would show her knowledge of them. But for once that curiosity which agitates even the wisest of women overcame her.

"Frank!" she exclaimed, "what *do* you mean?"

"Perhaps it's best for you to know," he said. He took from his pocket the note which Diana had left for him, and handed it to her without comment. When she had read it she said:

"You think they will go to this place in the Catskills?"

"I feel as sure of it as if they had told me. Don't worry too much. I sha'n't kill Fenn if it can be helped. I believe that I shall save Diana, and that fright will do the rest. I have the feeling that after to-day Mr. Ogden Fenn will not trouble her or me any more. Suppose you go into town later. Go to the Colony Club. You'll see lots of people you know. They'll ask after Diana and me. Say that we've gone to Combers with Ogden Fenn to dine and spend the night. Say that he's a great friend of ours."

"Shall you go to the Club?"

"To borrow a motor. No train goes within miles of Combers."

"You'll have to say where you are going. You ought to have some luggage."

"True!" exclaimed Manners, and he darted upstairs, for there was still time to pack a bag. It was a badly-packed bag when he had finished, and the heterogeneous contents caught up at random from chairs and from the library table were held in place

by a tan pillow from his sofa. He transferred to the bag the heavy automatic which he had at first placed in his hip pocket, and where its size and weight were already turning it into a nuisance.

A few minutes later he had kissed Tam good-by and was on his way to the station.

The day had turned warm. Many of the bulbs which Tam and Mrs. Langham had planted were in bloom. The trees and bushes were all dressed in green now, and the summery whirring of a lawn-mower broke the stillness.

Tam stood on the doorstep until the motor containing her father had disappeared behind a promontory of lilacs. She adored him, and his departure even for short absences had the power to cast a momentary gloom over her bright and tender spirit. The new puppy, a creature all wags and paws, came woggling and galumphing around the corner of the house. And from Tam's spirit the gloom was swept away by her own piercing cry of joy.

On entering his club Manners learned, with something of the elation experienced by a poker player when at last a good hand has been dealt him, that his cousin, Peter Manners, was in the reading-room. He knew no man more able and willing to help him, no man so discreet, and no man of whom he was so fond.

Peter Manners had inherited a small fortune, and without, so his admirers insisted, ever going south of Twenty-third Street, had turned it into a big one. Nature had showered him with the most pleasing and comfortable gifts; and his world was ready to give

him whatever he asked for. He was supposed to lack the marrying instinct; but Frank Manners knew that this was not so, and that his cousin had been in love for many years with a woman whom he could not possibly marry. He could not even tell her that he loved her. It is probable that she knew of his love, but did not realize its depth or its beauty; she thought of it perhaps as that pretty sentiment of regret and agitation without which no bachelor, who is all things to a good many people, is complete. Upon her birthday flowers always came from him. But then there were other women, like Mary Hastings, who invariably received flowers from him upon their birthdays. Often when the woman he loved and her husband were hard-up, he found ways to make life easier and more agreeable for them. He would complain that his runabout did not drive as he wished, and he would beg them, as a favor, to take it off his hands, if they happened to need a car, and break it in for him. He was ready to lend the husband any amount of money at any time, and in subtle and hidden ways he helped the husband in his career. If they had both died he would have adopted their child and made a fairy princess of her. The husband, who knew of their love, would have trusted his wife with Peter Manners upon a desert island. In addition, the men loved each other like brothers, and it had been like that with them ever since they were children.

Peter Manners was the sole occupant of the reading-room, and this made it possible for the two cousins to disregard the notice which urged upon members of the club the beauty of refraining from conversation. When

they had shaken hands, Frank Manners at once asked his cousin if he could lend him a car. He explained why:

"Diana and I," he said, "are going up to Combers, to dine and spend the night with Ogden Fenn. There's only one good train and I've missed it. They've caught it, and it will look queer to the natives if they get off at the station, bag and baggage, and me not with them. If you'll lend me a car I believe I can get to the station before them. I might. It's worth trying and, anyway, there isn't another train till late afternoon, and Fenn has no telephone. I've *got* to get there somehow."

"Why, of course you have," said Peter Manners. He rose with a certain languor and, his eyes smiling in the most kindly way, clapped an arm about his cousin's shoulder and gave him an affectionate squeeze.

"You shall have a car," he said, "and you shall have company."

Their eyes met, and the eyes of the man who had been lying to his best friend soon shifted into discomfort.

"Cassius," said Peter Manners, "hath a lean and hungry look. Also no railroad runs within fifteen miles of Combers. Have you a gun?"

Francis Manners was glad that his attempts to deceive had failed. He could meet his friend's eye now. His friend would go with him. Everything seemed easier.

"It's in my bag," he said.

"You've had the sense to bring a display of luggage. Good."

"Mrs. Langham suggested it."

"She would. You will turn the gun over to me. Now I'll telephone to my garage, and you'll order a very large package of sandwiches—ham and chicken—fifty-fifty. Just because Rome is burning, Troy falling, and Helen skipping off with Paris, is no reason why the Manners cousins should deny themselves food. Are you sure they are going to Combers?"

"Combers is the one best bet," said Francis Manners.

For many reasons which seemed good to him, Peter Manners made light of the expedition.

"We mustn't forget," he said, "that it is a beautiful day, that we are fond of motoring, and that we are going to see some beautiful country."

But he listened with the most considerate sympathy and attention to all that Francis Manners had to tell him about Diana. And although he did not take Diana's side, for it was obvious to him that she had none, he stood up for her, and recalled times when the fine traits in her character had shone like pure gold. But the advice which he gave to his cousin had a chivalrous rather than a worldly base. And he insisted that Diana's happiness and her good name were the most important issues involved in the problem.

"It is possible," he said, "for any man to live without any woman; to be cheerful in his renunciation and to make a good many things pleasanter for other people."

"You yourself are the best possible example of that," said Francis Manners, "and I take off my hat to you. I've loved as faithfully as you have and for more years. I've had the luck to be loved back. I married

the girl I wanted. And if we weren't perfectly happy together, we came as close to perfect happiness as any two human beings ever did. But now that I've lost out; now that I'm in the same boat that you've had to row so long, instead of behaving like a cheerful gentleman and thinking like one, I think and behave like a half-crazy egomaniac."

"I used to say to myself," said Peter Manners, "she loves another man; they are as happy together as two human beings ever have been; but even at that she can't be perfectly happy; now what can I do to make her the least little bit happier than she is? Of course there never was much of anything that I could do; but thinking along these lines was mighty good for me personally."

"I *can't* think along those lines."

"You mean you won't. I don't know of anything worth doing that you *can't* do. You must think more of just what you can do to make Diana happy."

"But she'll fall out of love with this fellow just as she's fallen out of love with me."

"We don't know that. And we do know that she's game to run away with him. We are going to save her reputation this time, I hope and believe. The next time it won't be so easy to guess where they have gone."

"Do you think I ought to furnish grounds?"

"I think that you ought to make her the most generous proposition that can be made."

"I listen," said Francis Manners, "but I don't promise to obey."

For a few moments the congestion of a short village

street required careful driving, and Peter Manners didn't answer. Then he said:

"Tell her," he said, "that you will furnish grounds —New York grounds—so that she can get her divorce quickly and easily. Tell her that you will let her have Tam, and that you will give her all the alimony you can possibly earn."

Neither of them spoke for a long time. Then Francis Manners said:

"You think that perhaps she wouldn't have the heart to accept those terms?"

"I think it's an even bet with the odds in your favor. But I shouldn't burst in on them and make that proposition right off the bat. And whatever you do, don't scold and rant. And don't let her see that you hate Fenn."

And for minutes Peter Manners outlined at great length a plan of procedure which he thought ought to be adopted. Francis Manners didn't at once fall in with this plan, but in the end he agreed to adopt it, and to play his part in it to the best of his ability.

Soon they left the main arteries of travel, and had to proceed more slowly. Peter Manners had passed more than once through the village of Combers, but he was somewhat vague as to its exact location; and he had no memory whatever of the roads by which it was to be reached. Stopping to make inquiries and a puncture delayed them. In both men the excitement of the chase was rising. Neither would admit for one moment that the elopers might have fled to any other place than Fenn's house near Combers.

It was possible, however, that they had not eloped

at all. It was possible that Fenn had refused to commit Diana to an irretrievable error. It was possible that Diana was spending the day in her apartment sulking.

In any event Fenn would not have taken her to his own rooms, for even the most ardent lover does not relish the idea of being shot; and that lover's room was the first likelihood that would enter an angry husband's mind. No. Combers was the place.

At Combers they learned from an elderly man who loafed on the steps of the grocery store, and occasionally spat, that Mr. Ogden Fenn had passed through the town not ten minutes before. He had passed through in a dark red car driven by a lady. Peter Manners expressed surprise and regret.

"Did they ask if *we* had passed through?" he asked. They had not.

"We made a bet on who'd get here first," Peter Manners explained. "We gave them a good head start, and came by a different road; a better road we thought and a shorter." He turned to his cousin, and said ruefully, "I'll have to write Mr. Ogden Fenn a cheque, and *you'll* have to buy your wife a new hat."

The loafer told them how to reach Mr. Fenn's house, and he chuckled and winked as if the idea that they had lost their bet was pleasant to him.

Francis Manners was profoundly thankful that he had not come alone. He had the greatest reliance on his cousin's tact and resourcefulness. And in that calm and cheering companionship he could keep his own nerves and temper in hand. Nevertheless his heart began to beat furiously at the sight of Ogden Fenn's

little house, and it seemed cruel to him that he must not burst down the front door and do murder with his bare hands.

They left the car at the side of the road, and, Francis Manners carrying his traveling bag, finished the tag end of their journey on foot.

The arrangements of the little house were extremely simple. The main block contained a hall and living-room in one and a small dining-room. Above these were two bed-rooms separated by a bath-room, and a large closet. A small block contained the butler's pantry, the kitchen and the caretaker's room. The front door was ajar, and the Manners cousins pushed it open and entered the house without knocking.

Diana had not yet removed her hat or coat. It was cold in the house, and Ogden Fenn, on his knees, was coaxing a fire into life. Diana stood at a little distance watching him. The backs of the lovers were turned so that the expression of their faces could not be seen. It was not so much the sound of the cousins' entrance as some abrupt intuition that caused Diana to turn and look over her shoulder. Fenn, intent on the fire, and making considerable noise with his logs and kindlings, did not hear the exclamation of dismay and fear that was torn from her.

But when she made two sudden steps to place herself between him and her husband, he looked up and around. The heavy log that he had been about to place scientifically fell from his hands with a thud. He scrambled to his feet, white and trembling. He expected to be killed.

"Mr. Fenn," said Francis Manners, "it is perfectly

safe for you to come out from behind my wife. I am not in a shooting mood."

"We're in a sort of week-end mood," said Peter Manners. He advanced with a very pleasant cheerfulness and laid his hat and gloves on the table that was in the center of the hall, and then, very carefully and methodically, he began to unbutton his greatcoat.

"The whole world," he explained, "knows that Mr. Fenn has asked all us Mannerses to dine and spend the night."

"Oh," said Diana drearily and in the voice of one who is suffering physical pain. "I'll go back with you."

"That wouldn't be polite to Fenn," said Peter Manners. "People would say that having tested his hospitality we had found it wanting. We have even brought our luggage. We have brought everything we need except things for the night and toothbrushes and hairbrushes and things like that."

"Diana," said her husband, who had been standing aloof, his face drawn and ghost white, "we have come because when a woman's good name goes, her last chance of happiness goes too. Fenn knows that. And if he really represents your chance of happiness, I couldn't *hurt* him. I love you too much. I've come to talk things over, and I've brought Peter. Fenn was very foolish to bring you here; but there's no great harm done."

"It's all my fault," said Diana, "he didn't want to run away with me."

"Mighty hard not to run away with you, Diana, when you are really insistent," said Peter Manners.

"It seems," said Francis Manners, "that Fenn and I both love you very much. Can't you leave your happiness in our hands and do what we think is best for you?" Tears rose in Diana's eyes.

"With two men loving me so much," she said, "I ought not to complain about anything."

Peter Manners, having divested himself of the great-coat, came close to her, and took one of her hands in both his. It was cold, and he began to pat and stroke it."

"Diana, dear," he said, "there are not two men who love you, but three. Did you never guess that the man who was best man at your wedding would have given his soul, everything but his honor, to be the groom? Have you never guessed why I haven't married? I love you with my whole heart and soul. But you were engaged to Frank, or almost engaged to him, when I found this out. And I am not the kind of man to break down another man's fences and trample on his flowers."

"I give you my word of honor," exclaimed Fenn suddenly, "that I am not as black as you paint me!"

"Ah," said Peter Manners, "you mistook what was left of the garden for a piece of pasture land. You didn't know that to Francis Manners it was still a garden. And that in a heart sorely tried, and hurt, he still hoped to build up the fences and coax the flowers back."

"Peter," said Diana simply, "and Frank: I made Ogden think that I had been terribly abused and misunderstood. I didn't tell him so; I just made him think so. I was a great deal happier with you, Frank,

than I deserved to be. I've given you a rotten, selfish deal. When you went to California I was terribly lonely. I think I was lonely for you, and I was hard-up and bored, and mamma and the country and everything got on my nerves. And because everybody has always spoiled me, I—well, I met Ogden and I liked him, and he was thoughtful and soothing. And—oh, he was just floating round bored and lonely and a long way from shore, and I leaned so far out of the boat that I fell in. He didn't make love to me. He is a gentleman and an honorable gentleman, whatever you think. One day I told him that I loved him and that I couldn't live without him. And I thought that with his love to back me up I could be strong and fine, and do right by you . . . and I can't . . . I *can't!*"

"I love you because of all the pure gold that is in you," said Peter Manners.

"And that is why I love you," said her husband.

The knowledge that Peter Manners, whom she admired immensely, had really been in love with her for many years had a softening effect on Diana's heart and a clarifying effect on her mind. Her vanity too must have been flattered, for it is certain that her eyes had become brighter and less tragic and her coloring more vivid. She had never looked more desirable.

And Francis Manners somehow felt that the disclosure, although the fact was old history to him, had relieved the tension under which he was laboring. Peter's love seemed to him more beautiful and less selfish than his own. Ogden Fenn was also affected. He had but to look at the sweet-tempered, lucid and determined face of the man who had loved and re-

nounced to see that an honest renunciation may well be counted on to bring contented coördination to a spirit in chaos.

"Have you brought enough dinner for four?" asked Peter Manners. Diana smiled brightly in his face.

"How good you are," she said, "and how kind!"

"I'll go to the village," said Fenn, "and pick up what I can."

"Good," said Peter Manners. "We others might walk to the top of the hill—I noticed an excellent little hill back of the house, Diana, and I shall show you all the kingdom of the Catskills. It's to be a house-party till after dinner. Didn't you bring any food *at all?*"

"I had what the darkies call 'a little lunch' put up at the Colony Club," said Diana. Peter Manners burst out laughing.

"So they put up a special elopement lunch?" he asked. "Come, I mean to climb the hill and see the sunset."

The two cousins and Diana found near the top of the little hill a corner in which the descending sun made a certain warmth. Here they seated themselves, their backs against a smooth rock, Diana in the middle.

Into the next half hour, Peter Manners put all that he had of tact and delicacy, all the fruits of his universal experience as a popular and much-trusted man. He behaved, in short, just as if nothing had happened. He was indolent, amused and amusing. It was not the first time that the three had made an excursion together. They had always been great friends. They had always enjoyed being together and talking to-

gether. In their talks, often of a teasing and pleasantly malicious nature, half-phrases had the value of paragraphs. Anecdotes and set stories were tabu among them; and each had a way of laughing that was contagious to the other two.

But the effort to behave as if nothing had happened was a very great effort, which opened Peter Manners's pores and caused the sweat to run out of him. And at first its effect upon the others was negligible. But after a while, for habit is very strong, they began to respond. And he observed, glancing sideways, that the muscles of his cousin's face were relaxing, and that Diana's wistful eyes had come back from the rim of the world. Then Francis Manners snapped forth a cynicism that conjured up before them all the oddities which made a certain friend of theirs at once ridiculous and lovable, and Diana shot in a word that filled their risibles with old time laughter. And after that there was never a serious word spoken; until suddenly—and it was like a change of scene at the play—they looked and saw that the western sky was all laced with gold and crimson.

It was mere habit that caused Diana to slip a hand beneath her husband's arm. The touch upon him was so light—so light that it was wonderful that, through all his sleeves, thick and thin, he should feel it at all. But he could not have been surer that she was touching him if her hand had been of iron and red hot. Would she withdraw the hand swiftly when she realized what she had done with it? He kept as still as a man should who attempts to tame some little wild thing. He held his breath.

Then Diana realized what she had done, and somewhat obviously she slipped her other hand under Peter Manners's arm, and she said:

"Help me up, you two."

They helped her to her feet.

"Fenn," said Francis Manners very gently, "will be wondering what has become of us."

It had not occurred to Diana that Fenn might not return to his house at all; that the dread of what these two tall and strong cousins might intend toward him might cause him to throw up his hands, and abandon a course which in his heart of hearts he knew to be mistaken.

But Fenn, after some vacillating, had resolved to see the situation through. He didn't believe that the two cousins intended him any bodily harm, but he dreaded being alone with them, and his resolution had called on him for real courage. It is true that the bachelor cousin had been casual and flippant, but in the husband's face there had been a fatal look; and he feared that when they got him alone they would put such pressure upon him as might squeeze out all his power of resistance. It is not easy to stand up for the motives which are inciting one man to ruin another man's life, and to compromise the whole future of a little child. To have run away with Diana, even at her insistence, put him in a bad light. "If her husband kills me," he thought, "even in cold blood, the jury will let him off, and people will merely say that I got what I deserved."

Revolving such thoughts, he had returned to his house with his arms filled with packages of provisions.

"I can never go back now," Diana had said; "every-

thing is all over forever between Frank and me. If you don't take me away, I'll kill myself."

And she had wept then, and Fenn had hurried off to his office to arrange for an absence, and to borrow a motor. But he knew as well as the next man the value to her of a woman's good name; and the knowledge that he was forever compromising and blackening the good name of the woman he sincerely loved had kept him very silent during the long drive from New York to Combers. Several times he had attempted to make her change her mind.

At the very time when he had been kindling and making up the fire, and just before the entry upon the scene of the Manners cousins, he had said to her:

"Diana, darling, it isn't too late even now! Are you sure that you want to give up everything for me? I don't think you know what you are doing."

She had not answered. For it was just then that some intuition had made her look over her shoulder and she had seen her husband's face.

CHAPTER XIV

THANKS largely to Peter Manners's efforts, and not a little to Diana's sense of poise, dinner was not marked by awful pauses. Francis Manners told them a good deal of California and the Californians. Fenn explained how he had come to build or rather to do over a house in such an inaccessible place. They complimented him upon his achievement. The house was charming. They complimented him on his improvised dinner. His old caretaker was certainly a treasure. Fenn admitted that she was, if you kept her to simple things. She couldn't cook anything very fancy. There was an upright piano in the hall, and after dinner Diana played for them, and sang cheerful little songs in her sweet throaty voice.

It was no longer necessary for the men to make an effort; they sat relaxed in deep chairs, and made much smoke, and looked upward, or at Diana, and each thought the thoughts which the playing and the singing inspired.

After a time Diana's hands dropped from the keyboard to her sides.

"I am going to bed," she said simply. "Good-night!"

The three men rose and accompanied her to the foot of the stairs; no one of them strove for any precedence over the other. She gave her hand first to Fenn and last to her husband. He raised it to his lips.

The three men resumed their seats and smoked in silence. Half an hour passed. Then Francis Manners rose, crossed to the fireplace and threw into it the stump of his cigar.

"I'm going up, too," he said. "Good-night!" Fenn and Peter Manners watched him in silence until he had disappeared from view.

"Will you drink something?" Fenn asked.

"Yes, thank you," said Peter Manners. "Scotch."

And when Fenn had visited the pantry and returned, with the whiskey, glasses, and some bottles of soda, Peter Manners made himself a stiff drink, and said: "They will have a good deal to say to each other, and I imagine that for to-night the room next to theirs—I have noticed that your partitions are very thin—had better remain vacant. You and I have a good deal to say, too. I daresay the night won't seem long."

He pulled from his inside pocket, where its weight and bulk had caused him considerable annoyance, his cousin's automatic pistol, and laid it convenient to his hand on the broad, flat arm of his chair.

"Threatening me won't do any good," said Fenn quickly, though the sudden sight of the cold, blue, shapely implement had almost made his heart stand still. "You will have to give me some better reason than death for giving up Diana," he went on. And his words gave him courage.

"At the moment," said Peter Manners, "we needn't talk melodramatically. The pistol was pulling my pocket all out of shape. And then I don't yet know you well enough to kill you. Everything hinges on what is best for Diana. It may be best for you to be

killed and for me to die in the electric chair at Sing-Sing. I don't know. But so much depends on the kind of man you are. Are you willing to give me an idea?"

"Yes," said Fenn. "But not because of your pistol. It will be because you love Diana too. I will answer any question that you care to ask me."

"Thank you," said Peter Manners. "You have been in love before?"

"Several times. But not like this."

"Have you had mistresses?"

"No, but I've sported about a certain amount."

"Have you been faithful to Diana ever since you fell in love with her?"

"Of course."

Peter Manners merely nodded and, for quite a long time, he asked no more questions, but sat smoking in a brooding silence.

"Fenn," he said at last, "none of us loves her any more than I do. But it's easier for me to put myself in your place than it is for my cousin to. You see, she has never belonged to us, but she has belonged to him for ten years. And I suppose you realize that she will always belong to him. You may be the most charming fellow in the world, the most chivalrous, the most generous, but she can never give you anything but shadows. The substance and the brightness are locked in her husband's heart. You can never get them out. She cannot steal them from him and give them to you. And she will tire of you, just as she has tired of him, and just as she has tired of another man. She has one chance to be happy. And that is to do

right. To do right now. Not later. The chance will never come to her again after she is married to you. It will not come then, because once she is married to you she can't do right. There will be no right left for her in this world to do."

After a long pause Fenn shrugged his shoulders and asked:

"What can I do?"

"Tell her," said Peter Manners slowly, "that you have been unfaithful to her, that there are reasons why you ought not to marry."

"But I have told her the opposite and that I was free as air. I have told her that there wasn't a reason in God's world why I shouldn't marry. I'm afraid I've boasted about it. I've made her think I am rather better than most men of my age. No. I can't. I'm hanged if I will."

Peter Manners settled more deeply into his chair, knitted his brow in thought and spoke no more for a long time. And indeed, during the rest of the night, very few words were exchanged between them.

Francis Manners sat on the edge of Diana's bed. The moon had risen. They had no other light.

She had been very sure that he would wish to speak to her before she went to sleep, so she had hurried with her undressing and had left her door unlocked. She had not, however, omitted her nightly prayers; or, at least, she had not failed to assume for a few minutes the attitude in which she said them. Barefooted, her hair rippling about her shoulders, with only a thin batiste nightgown to shield her body from the keen mountain air, she had knelt for some minutes by the

bed, her face buried in her hands. What she said to her Maker, if anything, is unknown. It is only known that when she heard her husband's step at the head of the stair, she rose lightly from her praying and with a kind of huddling shiver, hurried into bed and drew the coverings to her chin.

"Diana, dear," said her husband, "can you forgive me all my faults against you, as I forgive you all your faults against me?"

"I have nothing to forgive, Frank," she said quietly. "Nothing. And you have lots."

"Everything is forgiven, then, on both sides. Diana, I love you too much to hold you against your will. My first thought when I knew that you had run away with Fenn was how to save you from scandal. How to save you from yourself has been my thought all day, and not how to keep you for myself. Peter loves you, too. It is a good thing that I have had him with me, a good thing for us all. I am going to let you go free, dear. I think you've proved pretty well now that you really want to be free. . . . Do you mind if I pull down the window? It's awfully cold in here, and I've lots to say."

Across the foot of the bed, neatly folded, was a thin silk quilt. She advised him to put this around his shoulders. He did so, with a queer little laugh at the thought of the grotesque figure he must cut.

"First, dear," he said, " I can't let you go into court and swear that I have deserted you or that I have been cruel to you. That would be perjury."

"Then I don't see . . ." Diana interrupted.

"You shall have real grounds," her husband con-

tinued placidly. "I shall be unfaithful to you. I'll arrange so that there will be no difficulty about getting testimony. In as short a time as possible you will be free."

"Everybody will know it's a fake," said Diana.

"It will not be a fake," said her husband; "it is awful to me to think of being unfaithful to you, after twenty years of love and faithfulness. But they do say that once in a million years a wild goose is unfaithful to his first love; so I'll be the one."

"Frank," said Diana, "I can't bear it!"

"I am going to give up Tam to you, too," said her husband, "and when it's all over, and you are free, and I've settled a little to all the changes and all the heartaches and new points of view, why I'll work till I break to make you and yours just as affluent and comfortable as I can." She lay staring past him, into the shadows.

"So that's all settled," he said, with attempted cheerfulness. She did not speak.

"Don't think that I don't see your point of view, darling," he said; "to know that you are to start life all over again, loved and loving, must be very wonderful and beautiful. I know how I felt when we started. I'd loved you ever since you were a little girl. I'd always been great friends with your father, and I came to the house a lot on his account. One day I stopped coming on his account and kept coming on yours. You ran an ugly splinter into your thumb, and you came to me with the thumb held straight out, and your big blue eyes so hurt and brave, and a tear stopped halfway down each cheek. And while I was getting the

splinter out you trembled, but you didn't cry. And I loved you, and I knew that when you grew up I was going to marry you if only I could get you to love me. Somehow I knew that I could. But it was hard sledding all those years watching you grow up, waiting for you to be old enough to be made love to. I couldn't even play with you as often as I wanted to for fear your father and mother wouldn't like it. I've been terribly jealous of little boys your own age who came to see you, and brought you boxes of candy. And you had awful mashes on half-a-dozen of them. One day, when you were about fifteen, you had a new pony and runabout given you and you took me for a drive. Mud splashed on your cheek and I wiped it off with my handkerchief. That handkerchief is in my safety-deposit box with a little letter for Tam to read when she grows up and I am dead and gone. One day, for you were still half a boy, you came sliding out of an apple-tree. Your dear face was bright red, and your hair was mussed and full of broken twigs. You'd torn a couple of buttons off your shirtwaist and I could just see your breast, firm and young and brown—and —and gentle. I had one of those hunting-crop safety-pin things in my necktie and I pinned you up with it. Those were the moments in my life when I felt the most tender and compassionate and protecting. And when you came out and were old enough to be made love to, I kept away; because it seemed only fair to give you a chance to look all the men over before I tried to make you settle to me. And because you loved to flirt and be made love to, I had some hard times. When you'd been out nearly a year I began to make

love to you; but there was nothing novel or exciting about me. You were so used to me. I'd always been around. Sometimes it seemed as if I didn't stand a ghost of a show. And maybe I'd had you on a pedestal so long and worshiped you so that you seemed too much of a bright spirit to me, and not enough of a flesh-and-blood girl with desires and passions. Sometimes my pride told me to end it; to go away; and to forget. To forget *you!* Think of that! But one night you were lying on a long veranda chair, propped up against a pile of striped cushions. There was a full moon, and your blue eyes were as black as ink. It was August, and you had low neck and short sleeves, and no scarf, and a man never looked on anything so desirable since the first moon rose and love was born in the world. . . . I got out of my chair and knelt and laid my cheek against yours, and you never moved. The moon was in your heart and hair, too. And then I began to kiss you, and I kissed all of you that there was to be kissed, until our hearts were beating like drums in a battle, and almost it seemed as if you loved me as much as I loved you. . . ."

His voice thrilled with those memories. And she lay still as death, her eyes, black as pools of ink staring past him into the shadows. And at that moment there existed for her nothing but the vibrations of that impassioned and impassioning voice. He leaned toward her, and she turned her face toward him, and looked into his eyes. And at that moment she was not a high-born and fastidious gentlewoman, involved in the complexities of love entanglements; she was sex, thrilling to be kissed and conquered.

He caught her firm shoulders in his strong hands and leaned closer.

And then it was as if something cracked in his brain; he seemed to see, instead of Diana's red and parted lips, that stick of red grease whose use she had discontinued for the benefit of other lips than his. A revulsion of intention shook him from head to foot, and passion died in him, and his hands withdrew from her shoulders. He leaned away from her. He turned his face away from her. He replaced the quilted silk thing that had fallen from his shoulders. He drew it tightly across his breast. Bitterness, despair, loneliness possessed him. He was alone, flying a mile high in the bitter air, destined to sorrow for all the remaining years of his life for the mate he had loved and lost.

"Good-night, my darling," said the Wild Goose. "God bless and keep you always and make you happy."

He kissed her as he might have kissed a child. She did not turn her lips away, for they were still eager for kisses. And when he kissed her she kissed him back. But the quality of his kiss was like cold water thrown upon her passion.

"Good-night, dear, dear Frank," she said unsteadily, "and God bless and keep you."

When he had gone she turned her face to the wall and cried herself to sleep.

Francis Manners paced the hall outside her door. All the rest of the night he paced slowly up and down, his quiet footfalls lost in the thick carpet, his head erect, like a knight on guard before a shrine.

Neither at breakfast nor after breakfast was there any further discussion of the situation. Diana had waked with all her love and longing for Fenn renewed. She was going to accept the terms of divorce that her husband had offered. But with mental reservations she softened the clauses. They must always be friendly; Frank should see Tam whenever he wished. She herself could accept no alimony; just a small allowance to cover Tam's expenses. Already she felt like a free woman. She made no objection to driving her husband back to town. Now that Fenn was an assured possession it was no longer a crying necessity to be with him every moment of the time.

Manners's face bore few traces of the night's vigil and suffering. He had made up his mind to renunciation. He was quiet and reserved, but easy and cheerful. Fenn, who had learned from Diana of the impending divorce, felt an immense gratitude toward her husband, gratitude and admiration. Only a real thoroughbred, he thought, could be so self-sacrificing and generous.

Upon Peter Manners the night seemed to have weighed most heavily. Perhaps it was because he had smoked and drunk too much, perhaps it was because of the desperate plan which had taken possession of him. As a last resource he would execute that plan, but as a drowning man wishes for a helping hand so he wished that some other way could be found.

Diana herself had told him of the terms upon which she was to have her divorce.

"And you are going to accept, Diana?"

"Sooner or later we'd run away again, Peter," she said; "it's got to be."

"Diana," he said, "you have one chance of happiness, and only one. Do right!" She made no answer.

"If you would do right," he said, "I'd gladly die."

"Peter, dear," she entreated, "it's best the way it is. *Please* don't scold me."

They had no more words on the subject, and soon after she and her husband had departed in the dark-red car, Peter Manners cranked his powerful runabout and followed with Ogden Fenn in the seat beside him.

They came in time, driving slowly, to a long and straight descent of dirt road. It was this descent which Peter Manners had remembered in the night, and which had offered him one last desperate solution of the whole problem.

"Fenn," he said, "if I shoot you, you become a martyr. Diana would make a saint of you in her memory, and she could never make up things with her husband; because it would be almost as if he himself had done the shooting. But if we die together like a couple of bums who have stopped at too many roadhouses she will soon forget you, and the chances are that she will be shocked into behaving herself." The car was moving with greatly accelerated speed.

"I am sorry," said Peter Manners. "You seem to be a goodish sort of a little man in your way, but you've raised hell with the two people I love most."

Fenn glanced at the grim and determined profile of the man who drove. His heart turned cold. The car was going at a terrible rate.

"Say," he said, "there's a hairpin turn at the bottom of this hill!"

"And a high cliff. I remember."

Ogden Fenn struck the rug from about his legs and half rose to his feet. The car gave a sudden leap, and he sat down hard. Peter Manners loosed one hand from the steering-wheel and seized the back of Fenn's neck in a vise-like grip. The bottom of the hill with the hairpin turn and the fragile railing that alone guarded it from the brink of the cliff were rushing toward them.

"I do this," cried Peter Manners suddenly, "so that a little child may grow up with a father and a mother —in a *home*. And may God have mercy on my soul!"

"Oh, for God's sake!" screamed Fenn.

His hat blew off, and he clawed at his head in a frantic and ridiculous effort to save it.

We learn from soldiers and sailors, and we might better perhaps learn from those crazed savages who run amuck, or from the rat who turns at last and dies valiantly in his corner, that if only the occasion be sufficiently desperate to call it forth, courage is an article of no great rarity. It was not because of fear that Ogden Fenn had screamed "Oh, for God's sake!" and when he clawed frantically and ridiculously at his hat he was neither ridiculous nor frantic. He simply looked so. For if during the course of the next few seconds he was to lose his life, it could not have been a matter of moment to him, or even of uneasiness, what in the meantime became of his hat.

Seeing the imminence of death, and feeling that the impetus of the heavy car must carry it inevitably

through the flimsy railing and over the cliff, he felt rather than thought that no power of brakes could in so short a distance stop the terrible rush and save him from destruction. He accepted the fact of death, the inevitability, the impossibility of escape, and he rose to it with a kind of wild exultation; with no thought of saving himself and with no thought except to make his murderer's suicide seem vain, he shouted: "*She'll* know!"

Peter Manners caught the words, and by the grace of one of those moments when the mind is quicker than electricity, understood the wild folly of his attempt, and with all the power and suddenness of which he was capable put on the brakes. Fenn was smashed against the windshield and Manners was hurt against the steering wheel. There was a sound of rending and grinding, then the headlights and the radiator passed with a slow crashing sound through the railing that guarded the road from the cliff, and the car stopped. A plumb-line grazing the extreme advance of the front wheels would have hung clear of the cliff.

"Get out!" said Manners. Fenn got out awkwardly, for he was badly shaken and Manners followed suit. With rocks Manners wedged the rear wheels so that they could not turn forward another inch. Then, when he had rested, and recovered control of his nerves, he climbed painfully into his seat, and backed his machine out of danger. "Will you ride the rest of the way with me?" he asked, "or would you rather walk?"

"I'll just get my hat," said Fenn, "if you don't mind waiting."

Peter Manners waited, his arms, which trembled slightly, folded across the steering-wheel. He could not have said whether he had waited a minute or an hour, when Fenn, brushing the dust from his hat, rejoined him. Manners did not at once start the car. "You are right," he said, "*of course* she'd know. It's exactly the same whether I shoot you or drive you over a cliff." He let in the clutch and the car moved slowly forward, and having achieved the hairpin turn proceeded at once with greatly accelerated speed. From time to time out of the corner of his eye Fenn stole a look at Manners. It would be easy, he thought, to follow such a man into battle. He wondered why Diana had fallen in love with the other Manners instead of this one. "She would have been far happier," he thought; "she would never have any use for me."

"I wish," said Manners suddenly, "that I could see inside your brain. I wonder just what it feels like to have taken a wife away from a husband, and to have spoiled a little child's best chances." He did not speak with contempt, but speculatively.

"With some men," said Fenn, choosing his words carefully, "I suppose that the thing happens without any intention, and such men probably cannot help feeling very proud at having won the woman's love, and very sorry that they cannot have it without hurting others. Such a man would realize his responsibilities toward the woman more than if she were a girl. He would perhaps go more intelligently and systematically about the business of making their marriage a success."

"He would need to," said Peter Manners, "for I

think that when the husband still loves his wife, and has done her no wrong, such a marriage can never be a success. Diana is not entirely abandoned to her selfish impulses. It is only that for the time being these have the upper hand. How will she feel when in their turn the instincts to be just and self-sacrificing have the upper hand, and remorse sets in? And I feel sure, for I know her very well, that this will happen. And I think that it will happen the moment it is no longer possible for her to ask her husband to forgive her and to take her back. It will happen very likely in the moment when you and she turn your backs on the altar as man and wife."

"If," said Fenn, after a pause, "we are ever to be married, do you think it is quite fair to wish us so much unhappiness and disappointment? I should think her friends, no matter how much they hated me, would want our marriage to be happy and successful."

"Those who were really her friends," said Manners, "would of course try to make it so."

CHAPTER XV

Francis Manners felt that he had played his last card and shot his last bolt, and that Diana definitely wished to be rid of him. He was like a man who, having exhausted himself with frenzied effort to save his house from burning to the ground, perceives that the building is doomed beyond peradventure, resigns himself to its loss, and upon the instant turns Stoic. He had a certain sense of release. He had fought for the right. He had been beaten. He was sorry that wrong had prevailed, but he was glad that the war was over, and that the demobilization would soon be effected. He had taken arms against a sea of troubles; since he could not end them, let them end him.

It was not without a cynical amusement that he remembered the business he had undertaken. He had promised Diana to furnish her with the only grounds upon which in the State of New York a woman may divorce her husband. And for some days following her arrested elopement he occupied himself with this quixotic and depraved project. Sometimes he talked it over with Diana. He hoped perhaps that the ghastliness of the business, the cold-blooded wickedness of it, might even at the eleventh hour turn her from her intentions. But if he entertained such a hope he did not express it.

Now that she was sure of having her own way Diana

had more time for Tam and for her household duties. Fenn must keep. It was obvious that until some months after the divorce her name and his must be as little connected as possible. In consequence, Francis Manners saw a great deal of his own wife.

One day, when his plans for her benefit were more or less in shape, he laid them before her. "Diana," he said, "you can't have the great climax in the third act until you have had the first act and the second act. It won't do for me and the beautiful blonde to be trapped out of a clear sky. From now on I am going to neglect you and spend most of my time in town. I am going to neglect you so that people will notice it. I'll live at the apartment and I'll let people believe that after ten years' hard work and domestic worries I've declared a holiday. I'll preach the equality of the sexes. I'll maintain that a man has a right to live his own life and to fulfil his own destiny."

"I wish you wouldn't be so sarcastic and bitter," said Diana.

"I am not," he said. "I have managed to hide my bitter feelings and I take a certain mechanical amusement in those which remain in plain sight. That's all. I am trying to be practical. The most important thing is to see that your reputation comes through the divorce-court immaculate. To achieve that you must be the one who stays at home and I must be the one who goes traipsing. In short, I must seem to give you and Tam the same sort of deal that you have really given Tam and me. The thing can't be done off-hand. I've got to play around until I find a woman whom I might reasonably be conceived to think attractive,

and who wouldn't in the least mind being mixed up in a scandal."

"But if the whole thing is a fake?" objected Diana.

"It isn't a fake. Faking is too dangerous. If we plot against the law and are found out you will never get your divorce in this State, and I might conceivably go to jail. I'm not going to cheat, Diana."

She made no remarks.

"Does the pity of it strike you? That the only pleasure I can give you is to be unfaithful to you?"

He clenched his hands till the knuckles were white, for the pity of it and the bitterness were very plain to him. Then he continued in an even, matter-of-fact voice:

"I'll let you know, of course, when it's time for you to hire a detective. And I shall give you some valuable hints as to my new habits."

"People fake these things *all* the time," said Diana. She would not have confessed it, but the thought that Manners intended to be technically unfaithful to her had the power to hurt. Manners shook his head.

"You had no hand in making the law," he said; "no woman did; so it's easy to understand why women don't see the beauty of it. I lay claim to no special civic virtue. I'd rather flout the law than not, but it isn't safe. It's safer to break a commandment."

Diana deeply resented the idea that Manners was going to be unfaithful to her; but she could not have analyzed her justification. She would have sworn that she hadn't a tinge of jealousy; but it is probable that she had. She was more married than she knew. She had a higher conception of marriage as an institution

than she would have confessed. Not even Fenn knew that the break with Manners was almost as tragic to her as it was to him. It is probable that intellectually she could not have offered one single solitary excuse for what she had done. And it is probable that in her heart her love for Fenn was neither an excuse nor a justification. She may be likened to an average decent-minded human being who at last, under stress of torture, consents to commit crime. Some characters, as the history of religion proves, are stronger than the strongest pain; but the average church pillar would abjure his God at the second turn of the thumbscrew. Diana's character was in the making. It had its strength; but as a whole it was not yet so strong as love. It was as if love said to her: "Don't try to justify yourself, my dear, trust me. I will give you not only the happiness to which every woman has a right; but I will give you justification also. When all those who love you see how happy your choice has made you, they will be happy too."

Immediately after the return from Combers, Manners had said to Mrs. Langham: "We were in plenty of time. But there is no use butting into a stone wall. I have surrendered. I have thrown up my hands. I have promised to furnish grounds."

"In New York State?"

"Yes, Mrs. Langham." His words were a cry of bitterness.

Aside from Mrs. Langham he did not even tell Mary Hastings what he proposed to do. He would have given everything he possessed if he had not made that promise to Diana. And he even felt a certain resent-

ment toward his Cousin Peter for suggesting that he make it. For once Peter, from the highest motives, had given him bad advice. But though his soul writhed in revolt he meant to keep his promise; and he was too proud to ask Diana to release him from it. Sometimes there was a look in her face which made him hope that she would release him of her own accord.

That he might after a time find real diversion and inspiration to better work in sowing the wild oats that he had never sown sometimes occurred to him. But such thoughts had no power to convince.

It was hard for him during these days to be natural with Tam. He had committed himself to doing the child a great wrong; and it was not easy for him to look into the adoring and steadfast eyes. She seemed by some divine intuition of childhood to realize that his mood could have no gaiety in it, and she reflected his mood. He wanted her to be with him, close to him; but he wanted them both to be quiet. She seemed to understand that. The sorrow that he tried so hard to keep from her had overflowed in spite of him. He was a different Daddy, and yet the same. She loved him all the more. One day she said to her mother:

"You used to like the city better than the country, and now it's Daddy that does."

Francis Manners had not yet begun to sow his wild oats, but he was plowing the field. The conventional times found him at the bar of his club with one foot on the rail. He was always ready to accept stag invitations, theater parties and late suppers. He began to know the more notable ladies of the half-world by sight and reputation. He frequented the theaters and

the roof-gardens. He gave a poker party at the apartment. The players stayed to breakfast. People began to talk about him. They said that sooner or later all artists yielded to temperament, and that he was treating Diana shamefully.

"By gad," said one well-known rounder, "if I'd had a dear lil' wife like that I wouldn't be the man I am."

Francis Manners's whole life gradually became a lie. People speak lightly of men lying to save a woman. But it is one thing to tell a good, helpful lie with a straight face now and then; and it is quite another to fabricate a really colossal and telling lie out of everything that a man believes in and holds dear. In order to shield his wife's good name beyond peradventure, Manners had to neglect her when he wanted to be with her; to affect a love for the city which he did not feel; to keep late hours when he preferred early ones, and in appearance at least to go back on all his most cherished principles. And he had to seem gay and amused when he was eating his heart out.

Of course it wasn't all make-believe. He actually enjoyed the food which he appeared to enjoy. He really liked *brut* champagnes; and when people said things that seemed to him really funny his troubles were drowned in the laughter that came so easily to him. Nobody whom he associated with saw in him a tragic figure. He was a well-dressed, big-hearted, open-handed gentleman about town with a perfect right to life, liberty and the pursuit of happiness, and a perfect eye for good looks.

Drinking too much, smoking too much, and sitting

up too late agreed with him for a while. He gained weight and went through a kind of rejuvenescence. If he had not been in love with Diana he might in time become the wholly selfish and self-centered person that he appeared to be. Even at forty it is not difficult to form new habits when the heartstrings have been loosed. And he was very attractive to women, and on general principles they were attractive to him. He might in time overcome his shyness and his fastidiousness. "After all," he would encourage himself, "I'm a male."

One morning before he was up his brother-in-law, Kingland Langham, telephoned and made an appointment to see him later in the day. The matter, Kingland said, was urgent.

"Shall I come down-town?" Manners had asked.

"I think I'd better come to your flat," Kingland had answered. "It's a family matter; we can be more private there."

"Shall we say five o'clock?"

"Five it is."

"Nothing serious?"

"I wouldn't quite say that; it remains to be seen."

Kingland Langham was punctual to the moment. He was that kind of a man.

"Look here, Frank," said Kingland, bending his heavy brows slightly, and looking suddenly upward from the toes of his spatted shoes to his brother-in-law's face, "what's all this I hear about you and Diana?"

"What have you heard, King?"

"I hear that you are playing round with Moffit and Carlton and Digbee and all that crowd and all the gay ladies in town. I don't say I believe all that I hear. I've come to you to hear what I've heard denied. I've known you all my life; and what I've heard about you is so utterly unlike you that I'll only believe it from your own lips."

"I must try not to be so conspicuous," said Manners.

"Then it's true?"

"King, men change as they get older. I've been pretty domestic for a good many years. I was getting stale. I need change. I've been doing bad work."

"That's not a good reason for making Diana unhappy. You're not tired of her, are you?"

Manners did not answer this question. He simply said: "Diana's not as unhappy as you think she is."

"I'll ask her. I don't believe in beating about the bush. I'll go straight to her."

"You'll find that she isn't worrying her head off about me," said Manners.

He couldn't help laughing when his brother-in-law had gone. "The first thing I know," he thought, "Diana will be running in to tell me I'm behaving badly and making her unhappy. Good Lord!"

He got her on the telephone and warned her of the visit that she was to receive from her brother Kingland. Diana said that Kingland was a meddling fool, but a dear. This conversation came to an awkward pause. Then Diana said:

"How are you getting on?"

"Are you impatient?"

"No, Frank, only——"

"Only what?"

"Isn't there some other way?"

"There is no other quick way."

His heart was beating fast. Almost he believed that she was going to say that she would not see him degraded, and that she would take the long way. Her next words were: "Are you all right?"

He sighed. She was not going to choose the long way.

"Frank," she said, "people are beginning to treat me as if I were a martyr. It makes me sick. It's so unjust to you. I'm the one who has done wrong. Don't you suppose I know that?"

Again his heart began to beat, and again she dashed his hopes.

"I'm *so* sorry," she said, "but I just can't help myself. It's life or death to me."

"That's all right, Diana." He managed to speak in a natural voice though he was half-crazed with sudden jealousy. He added: "Listen, Diana; it's time to keep an eye on me. I'm having supper at the Knickerbocker after the play. I may or may not come back here afterward. I don't know. I want to get this business settled."

Diana's first interview with the chief of the detective bureau to which she had been recommended by Ogden Fenn had tried her cruelly.

Mr. Raghorn, the chief of the bureau, did not look like a detective. He was diminutive, plump, and childlike.

"Mr. Raghorn," she had said, "I have been told that I may rely absolutely on your discretion." His voice

was pitched too high and he had a quick, sharp way of speaking. "You must," he said.

"I want very much," she said, "to have someone watched."

At this point Mr. Raghorn's eyes began to fascinate her. They were bland, childlike, and rather too full. They were pale blue, and they never blinked.

"It's my husband," she said, and she added, "it oughtn't to be very hard. He is quite open about what he does."

"You imagine that he may be neglecting you for someone else?"

Diana bowed her head slowly, and did not look up for a moment.

"No need to tell me why you want him watched. If he is making you unhappy I am very sorry. If it's the other way round, I don't want to know." Diana blushed painfully. "One of my chief sources of revenue," said Mr. Raghorn, "is watching husbands whose wives have fallen in love with somebody else. But my work is *bona fide*. I have nothing to do with motives. I do not compromise the husbands. I merely certify that they are compromised and send in my bill."

Diana timidly inquired the price *per diem* of having her husband watched. Since Manners would have to pay for the privilege of being shadowed the fee seemed exorbitant and she said so. He had enough heavy obligations as it was. But Mr. Raghorn was perfectly firm about the figures.

"But," Diana objected, "it might be weeks and weeks before—before anything happened, and I simply couldn't pay so much."

"Perhaps," said Mr. Raghorn, "your intuition may help us out. One of these days you might have what they call a hunch, and tip us off to it. Is that possible?" Again Diana blushed painfully.

"The whole thing is a sort of hunch," she said. "I'm not sure of anything. Perhaps we had better wait a little."

"Meanwhile," said Mr. Raghorn, "I'll have one of my men familiarize himself with your husband's appearance. Then we'll be all ready to pitch in when you give the signal."

"It may be just my foolish imagination," said Diana, rising slowly.

"More likely," thought Raghorn, when she had gone, "it is the husband's foolish chivalry."

If the nasty business could have been got over with at once, it might not have preyed so on Diana's mind. It is possible that, during the long weeks of waiting for Manners's new way of life to develop the one concrete episode which the law required, some of the links in the chain of passion by which she was bound to Fenn began to wear thin. A chain, as all men know, is only as strong as its weakest link. But perhaps it was not her passion which weakened anywhere or in any way, and she had begun to examine more often, and with greater dismay, the impractical meshes of her entanglement.

She was highly determined not to take any money from her husband; Tam's expenses he was of course welcome to pay, but not hers. She and Fenn then would have very little money; that is at first they would have very little. Fenn was confident that with

Diana's love to inspire him he would become a big earner. Well, that love had already been inspiring him for a good many months without producing any startling change for the better in his affairs. To be absolutely historic it had not so far produced any change at all.

When Manners said over the telephone that he would bear watching, that after the play he was to have supper at the Knickerbocker, she was in one of her most skeptical and discouraged moods, and her heart almost stood still. And it was with no sense of excitement or elation, but heartsickly and with bitterness, that she telephoned to Mr. Raghorn and gave him the hint for which he had been waiting.

She herself was dining that night at the Piping Rock Club. She had no sooner reached the club than upon a sudden resolution she went to the telephone and tried to get in connection with her husband. She tried the apartment. He had dressed and gone out to dinner. She tried Delmonico's, Sherry's, the Ritz, his club, all in vain. "But never mind," she thought, "he'll be at the Knickerbocker after the play. That won't be too late."

But he was not at the Knickerbocker. She telephoned once from the Piping Rock Club, and again when she got home to make sure. She learned that Mr. Manners had come to the supper-room, with a party of ladies and gentlemen, but as there had been some mistake about the table reserved for them they had gone elsewhere. The Knickerbocker was very sorry, but it could not say where. Diana began to feel like those persons who in their efforts to do right are

continuously thwarted and brought to grief. Exactly what she had to say to her husband she did not know; his voice over the wire would be her inspiration.

But it is certain that Diana had the wish to save him from a cynical and irrevocable act. She had more than the wish. She no longer loved him, but memories of the years when he had been all the world to her now filled her mind and heart. His long faithfulness in loving and his purity now smote her with their full value. She didn't want that splendid record smirched and spoiled. She wanted her freedom, but she did not want to pay the price. That even now her husband, her faithful lover for so many years—but the thought was intolerable. What did the partner of his crime look like?

She telephoned to every place in the city at which he might be having supper with his gay friends, or alone perhaps with the woman he had chosen. But all in vain. Mrs. Langham was aware of the telephoning that was going on. The doors and the partitions of the house were thin, and she had become a light and fitful sleeper. She heard Diana's feet on the stair.

"Diana," Mrs. Langham ventured, "is anything the matter?"

Without moving Diana answered:

"I think I am the most unhappy woman in the world!"

Such an admission, so utterly unlike Diana, was very startling and alarming to Diana's mother. But at first her alarm was mixed with a wild hope. Had Fenn begun to cool off? If only that were the case, all might yet be well. But Diana dashed that hope.

"Do you think it's any fun to have ruined the best man in the world?"

"Then why not stop ruining him?" said Mrs. Langham with good-natured coolness, "before the ruin is complete?"

"Oh," said Diana, "you've known what's in the wind, though you never speak about it. It's for tonight. I've tried since before dinner to get hold of him and stop him. I haven't been able to find him. It's too late."

"I want to be sure that I understand."

"Oh, he's somewhere in New York furnishing me with grounds for a divorce. And I have hired detectives to trap him, and I wish I were dead!"

"Even if he does furnish you with grounds," said Mrs. Langham, a little sharply, "you don't have to use them. If you do use them you will always be a very unhappy woman."

"Even if I wanted to, I couldn't take him back *now*."

"Diana," said her mother, "I take it for granted that you are technically a good woman; but you've let men, not your husband, kiss the bloom off you. If Frank said that he couldn't take *you* back I'd understand and sympathize. But for you to say that you couldn't take *him* back after doing what you have insisted on his doing, is an insult to my sense of humor."

"You've always been on his side!"

"Because he has been right and you have been wrong."

Diana went slowly downstairs again to the library. Mrs. Langham, remembering Diana's telephoning, went back to her room a moment to slip into a gown

and then followed her down. As she came in Diana turned to her again: "You can't always be an infallible judge of everything."

"Perhaps not," said Mrs. Langham dryly, "but I can tell you how to straighten out your life and clean up the awful mess you have made. I have an infallible method."

"Yes?" said Diana.

"Do right," said Mrs. Langham. "Do the one thing you have never done. Do *right!*"

Before Mrs. Langham had reached the asylum of her own room, Diana had let go of herself and begun to sob.

CHAPTER XVI

THE reason Diana had not been able to get her husband on the telephone was simple. Finding that there had been a mistake about their table at the Knickerbocker, his party had broken up. And a certain Mrs. Herriot had driven off triumphantly with him.

Gradually they had been thrown more and more into each other's company. Mrs. Herriot was the only lady in the half-world who so far had attracted Manners in the least. She was straightforward and sincere, generous to a fault (her faults were mostly owing to her generosity) and extremely pretty. Perceiving that no other woman of her acquaintance had any attraction for Manners she was undeniably flattered. Already she was beginning to think that she was fond of him. He had proposed merely to see her home, but it was in her mind that the affair might be induced to progress a little further. She would confide to him that she had a cold roast chicken in the ice-box and a bottle of very *brut* champagne, and she would invite him to share these things with her. It would not be her fault if he went supperless to bed.

Mrs. Herriot was not a siren. She liked men; because she was generous, she was extravagant, and because she was extravagant she was usually stone-broke. In addition she was not good company for herself.

When Manners proposed a turn in the Park she was

delighted. It was obvious that he was in no hurry to leave her. He put his head out of the window and gave an order to the driver of their taxi. He did not at once withdraw his head but turned and looked behind them down the avenue. A few moments later they had entered the Park at Fifty-ninth Street.

"Most any park's a lovely thing at night!" said Mrs. Herriot, "and most especially this old park. I used to roller-skate all over it when I was a little girl. I was in love with a policeman."

"It isn't so hard to be lovely at night," said Manners. He turned and smiled quietly at her. "Now *you* manage to be lovely even in the daytime. That's the great test."

Mrs. Herriot laughed with pleasure.

"Do please say that again!" she cried. "I didn't know you ever said pretty things to ladies."

"But I do sometimes," he said, "and you are a witness."

Now, Manners had been preparing himself during the evening to play in some such scene as this. Otherwise, so heavy was his heart, he could not have spoken his lines with conviction. Diana would have known instantly that he had had a good deal to drink, but nobody else would have known.

The Park was almost deserted. Manners boldly slipped an arm round Mrs. Herriot and drew her close to his side.

"I think you're a very sweet little person," he said. She said nothing, merely turned her face a little, and looked earnestly into his eyes. Then her lips trembled and parted, and he kissed them.

Mrs. Herriot's is a practical world. The lovemaking in it is swift and to the point. The women have no illusions about themselves. The men have no illusions about the women. But Manners did not belong to Mrs. Herriot's world. And he told her that he was fond of her, and wanted her, so shyly and boyishly and tenderly that she was deeply touched. She fancied herself as playing a useful and comforting *rôle* in the life of a sufficiently celebrated man. He could soon perceive that at heart she was ever so decent and domestic; that she only appeared to love gaiety and late hours. Perhaps he would not just pay her visits when he felt so inclined. She pictured an end of her disordered and disorderly life and the beginnings of new and better things. Mixed with these thoughts, and gradually displacing them, the desire bred of his kisses and caresses at length mastered her. And when she saw that the taxi had nearly completed the tour of the Park, her eyes narrowed and she rejoiced exceedingly. She had never taken any stern measures to discipline her temperament. And she believed that Manners wanted her just as much as she wanted him. He had made her believe that. But his soul was in a turmoil.

Mrs. Herriot's kisses were horribly like Diana's at their best. In several ways she was not unlike Diana. She had the same loving note in her voice that Diana had had when she was in love with him. She had the same trustful way of melting into an embrace. Since he must sin he was glad that he had chosen to sin with Mrs. Herriot. But as the liquor died in him the thought, mixed, for he was human, with genuine desire, of being unfaithful to Diana seemed horrible to

him. And for the first time he thought seriously of cheating the law. "Let them find us together," he thought, "and let the world think what it must, only let me know that I have been faithful, only let me go on being faithful till death."

To the Wild Goose death, even torture, appeared infinitely preferable to unfaithfulness.

The taxi had turned the corner of the street in which Mrs. Herriot lived. A moment later Manners thrust his head out of the window and looked behind them. Then he turned to Mrs. Herriot and said:

"How much does your reputation mean to you?"

"I'd hate people to say I wasn't a good sport. Otherwise I have no reputation. Why?"

"I'm being followed. There's a taxi just behind with two men in it. They got in just as we were leaving the Knickerbocker. They followed us up the Avenue and around the Park."

"Have you got enemies?"

His words had excited without alarming her.

"No," he said, "but suppose some one was interested in knowing that I had gone to your apartment for supper, that I had stayed late, and that we were alone?"

Mrs. Herriot cooled a little.

"Am I part of a put-up job?"

He lied at once, beautifully, without the quiver of an eyelash.

"No," he said.

"What is it you want of me?"

"Nothing. It's like this. I haven't behaved very well, and I don't intend to. But it would be hard to

prove anything against me. And it isn't worth discussing, is it? Only I warn you to send me home if you aren't afraid of seeing your name in the papers."

She quoted from a play she had once seen and admired.

"There's only one thing worse than being talked about," she said, "and that's not being talked about."

Manners laughed aloud. The taxi drew up in front of the nickel-and-glass door of a handsome apartment-house. The second taxi did not at once stop, but kept on west for a dozen numbers or so. Meanwhile Manners and Mrs. Herriot had entered the building, and were waiting for the elevator to take them to Mrs. Herriot's apartment.

When the door of that apartment had closed behind them, Manners said: "How about that cold bottle, Elaine? I'm dry as dust."

"Frank," it was the faintest whisper.

"Yes, Elaine."

"You can't sleep?"

"No, dear."

The effects of the liquor that Manners had drunk to dull his moral senses had died.

He ached to the marrow with feelings of shame, remorse and degradation. Mixed with these feelings was a great tenderness and pity for the little person at his side, who was at once so naïve and sophistocated, so gentle and so ardent.

"I'm sorry. It's horrid to lie awake."

"Don't you worry about me."

"But I do."

Her tone of solicitude was grateful. He forced a laugh.

"You attend to your sleeping, and I'll attend to mine. I oughtn't to drink champagne. It keeps me awake."

"It isn't that. You've got something on your mind. I've known that all along. You haven't lived a very gay life, have you? I've known that all along. Do you wish you hadn't stayed?"

"You've been very sweet to me."

Little Mrs. Herriot sighed.

"Was it the truth when you said that I wasn't part of a put-up job?"

Now that the liquor was dead in Manners the thought of lying seemed much too dull and wearisome.

"Would you be angry? You'd have a right to be."

"Not angry. Hurt!"

"But I am fond of you. I think you're sweet. I think you're a wonderful little person. I want to paint something with you in it. I could change your face the least bit so that you wouldn't be recognized. I'd like to paint you against the light, so that your outline would be a kind of golden haze."

"When will you do it?"

"When I get my affairs all in order. August maybe. It'll be out of doors, so we'll need warm weather. I could take a little bungalow studio on the coast somewhere. Would you like that?"

"Then I'm not altogether part of a put-up job?"

"Not now."

"You're not going to chuck me right off?"

She hoped he would say that he was never going to chuck her. But all he said was: "No, dear."

Mrs. Herriot was very wise as to men's moods. She knew that her companion was suffering deeply and her instincts guessed the cause.

"You don't want to be divorced, do you?" she asked.

"I'd rather die." There was a pang of sudden hopeless grief in his voice.

"When a man loves his wife," said Mrs. Herriot, "he is all kinds of a fool to let her divorce him. He ought not to for her sake."

"But suppose the man's wife is desperately in love with some one else?"

"Oh, that!" said Mrs. Herriot skeptically.

In theory Manners would have stood torture sooner than discuss intimate family affairs with a light woman, and already he felt that he had said too much, and at the same time he was curious to know just what the point of view of a woman like Mrs. Herriot would be. With a sudden burst of confidence she enlightened him.

"Men," she said, "always want to know how the woman they're with first happened to go wrong. Women are always prepared to answer that question. Sometimes they say one thing, sometimes another. That's because it's always easy to make up something grander than the truth. The most notorious woman likes to believe that she would have been okeh if she hadn't had such bad luck that nobody could possibly make head against it. Would you like it if I told you about me? You've never asked or even hinted. I think I'd like to tell you."

"What—one thing or the other?"

"You know better. The truth. Knowing the truth

from the woman's point of view might help you more than any amount of good advice."

"I'd love to know *all* about you," said Manners.

"I was crazy about the man I married," began Mrs. Herriot abruptly, "and he was crazy about me. He was a one-woman man. He'd never really liked anybody but me. And I guess for a while we were just about as happy as two people can be. We'd be happy right now if I'd had any sense. One trouble was I had nothing to do but keep house. We had a tiny house, and it was easy to keep. But I guess even big houses aren't as hard to keep as women like to make out. It used to take me about an hour and a half or two hours a day at the very most. I never liked sewing or sitting around gossiping or reading, and so the rest of the day when my husband was down-town I had nothing much to do except kill time the best way I could. I tried to learn golf and tennis, but I was rotten at them. My husband bought me a pony and I took some riding lessons, but I had a fall and lost my sand. I don't quite know how it began, but I got playing with a little crowd at the country club that were pretty gay. The men didn't have to work and the women didn't want to stay put. They laughed at everything that was serious, and pretended that they didn't care what happened. Most of that was bluff; but it took me in. I got silly ideas about men and women and children. When I found that I was going to have a baby I was ashamed to go around with the crowd any more. And I stayed home eating my heart out thinking of the good times they were having and what bad luck I'd had. But one of the men used to drop in to see me real often.

I didn't mind him. He never seemed to notice that I wasn't looking my best. He was full of fun and would always make me laugh. First thing I knew I was thinking about that man oftener than about my own husband. And I read some books we had in the house about the great loves of history. It seemed to me beautiful for a married woman to have a lover who wasn't a lover, but just a spiritual affinity."

"I guess a good many women have that idea," Manners interrupted.

"All women at some time or other. I know a girl whose ideal of happiness was to get married first and find a real mate afterward. Silly fools! After my baby was born my husband got into some things that kept him from home more than ever. He not only had to go to town every day and stay late, but he had to make long trips to other cities. We had more and more money to spend, but I had more and more time to kill. And the man hung around more and more. He made me think I was neglected and unhappy before I'd ever thought of such a thing. Then he said he was making me conspicuous by our all the time being seen together. And after that I used to meet him in town and we'd have lunch at quiet places where we weren't likely to see people we knew. And sometimes, just to prove to myself that I didn't give a darn what other people thought, I'd go to his rooms for tea. I was just an imprudent little fool, nothing worse. Well, my husband found out and cut up something awful. He told me to drop the man at once, and for good, or he'd kill him. I told him I loved the man with all my heart and soul, that he was good and strong, and

wouldn't ever neglect me, and I wanted to be free to marry him. My husband asked me once and for all would I give up the man or wouldn't I. And I said I'd die first. My husband said then give him a few days to think things over and in the meanwhile for God's sake not to do anything I'd always regret. But he didn't take any time to think things over. He got a piece of lead pipe out of the cellar and he went straight to the man's rooms and waited till the man came in. I didn't know at the time. And I kept writing and telephoning; but the man kept out of the way. One day I met him face to face in the street, but he just hurried by and pretended not to see me. There was some mystery about it. My husband did something awful to him. And he nearly died of it. And he couldn't bring an action against my husband, because it would involve my name and because he was ashamed to.

"But my husband and I never really got back to first principles; we'd each hurt the other too much. And I fell in love again, and my husband was bored and tired by that time, and he let me go. He furnished grounds and let me have our little boy for my reputation's sake and paid big alimony. But he warned me what would happen. He said that big stiff you're crazy about is notorious. He doesn't *want* to marry you. See? He was right. First, he couldn't be married till he'd rounded up some business in the West; then it was because his aunt who was dying didn't believe in divorces and he was afraid she'd change her will. But he fooled me. I trusted him absolutely. When I found out that I'd been fooled, it wasn't the

being fooled that hurt most; but thinking about my husband, and how I'd hurt him and ruined him, just because I was vain and ruthless and couldn't stay put. I'd have given anything in God's world to go back to him; but I'd been fooled to the limit and couldn't even ask. Then he died. And that was the end of the alimony and everything. His brother offered me a little allowance on condition that I'd give up my little boy to him, change my name, and lie dead so far as the family was concerned. I'm just a typical case."

Having told her career Mrs. Herriot became infatuated with the subject, and embellished it with many details and comments. And she tried of course, naming no names, to draw a parallel between herself and Diana Manners.

"We women," she concluded, "always end by learning our lesson; but most always it's too late to be any practical good. Do you think if I had my chance over again that I wouldn't stick? Nine times out of ten it's the women like me, women that men don't marry (unless they are drunk), who would make the most faithful wives. We've learned the beauty and the value of faithfulness."

Manners looked at his watch. It was already six o'clock.

"The gentlemen in the other taxi," he thought, "have had a long wait."

CHAPTER XVII

FRANK MANNERS did not see Diana for a number of days. Nor did he see Mrs. Herriot nor any one whom he could avoid seeing. He was in a state of moral and mental anguish. It would have been better to have cheated the law. Anything would have been better than to have so smirched and lowered himself in his own eyes. Diana was his wife. Whether she abandoned him or not, that was a fact which could not be altered. He had taken her for better or for worse. He had gone back on his oath. He was a perjurer. More and more clearly he realized that his whole course had been wrong. "From the moment I learned about Fenn," he thought, "I have done the wrong thing every time there was a chance to do anything." And he saw very clearly what he should have done. "I ought not to have said that they could see each other once in a while," he thought; "I ought to have told them that they must go for a year without seeing each other or hearing of each other, and that if at the end of the year Diana still felt that she wanted to marry him, I'd arrange matters so that she could. But Diana would have refused with horrible threats—just as in fact she did refuse any such suggestion. Still, I ought to have said my little say and stood pat. I ought to have been perfectly easy-tempered about the whole thing. I ought not to have allowed myself to be so upset. I should have made Diana understand that

every time she saw Fenn she simply put off the end of her probationary year, and I should have gone my way peacefully and confidently. I ought to have trusted her. If we hadn't had horrible scenes she wouldn't have run off with him. If I'd kept my temper and heartaches to myself and gone on quietly about my business everything would have come out all right."

Manners really believed this, and not without good grounds. It is true that at first Diana would have refused any such bargain. But the chances were that in the long run she would have accepted his end of it. That she could keep in love with a man like Fenn for a whole year without ever seeing him was a ridiculous idea. She wasn't that kind of a woman. Manners felt very sure of this. "I had a perfectly good chance," he thought, "and I didn't see it. I didn't think I had any. And now, God help me, everything is all over. And Diana's done for, and I'm done for, and Tam hasn't half the chance she ought to have."

During these days he received several notes from Mrs. Herriot and answered them; but he did not go to see her. Later on he would begin to see her again. He could sink no deeper into degradation, and in time she might become of definite comfort to him. At least he would not see her until he had seen Diana. But he kept putting off that interview, and in the end it was Diana who came to see him.

Diana had no manner of pushing a bell-button that was in any way individual with herself. All depended on her mood. So that when the bell of the apartment sounded it was only Manners's intuition which could have told him that it was his wife who had rung it.

The poor, driven man had committed no great crime, and yet he started as might a criminal at the step of those who have come to take him. A sudden fear of the woman whom he had in no way wronged possessed him; and he did not at once go to open the door. Yet if it was to be opened at all he must do it himself, for the man who valeted had been sent upon an errand, and the woman who came in by the day had finished her work and gone home. He had the impulse to let the bell go unanswered, and that impulse lasted a long moment. He rose, then, slowly, went to the door and opened it.

"I knew it was you," he said. "Come in."

"You were a long time answering the bell."

"I know it. Sit down!"

He himself withdrew to a distance of some yards.

"I didn't want to see you, Diana. I am very sorrowful and ashamed. You have had a report from Mr. Raghorn?"

"Yes, Frank."

Her voice was icy cool. Her eyes at the same time were rather warm with interest and curiosity and there was in their expression also a trace of horror and jealousy. There was in her, though she did not recognize it as such, the fear that her husband was not now, after his experience with Mrs. Herriot, so sorry that he was to be divorced. If anyone had said: "But don't you want your poor husband to be happy, too?" she would have answered valiantly, "Of course." And that would not have been the whole truth. It would have been a sort of magnanimous intellectual gesture, contradicted by all the self-centerment of her sex.

"I could not now, Diana," said her husband, "ask you to come back to me." He smiled with a certain wistfulness and shook his head. "Yet it only needed what has happened to prove to me that I have not been altogether selfish in trying to keep you. My dear, for every woman in this world there is one man and not two. For every man there is one woman. You were that woman to me and I was that man to you. Between us we have made a mess of things, and the hour has struck. It is a great pity. Some benefits you may think at first that you have found with the new love, but in the end you will only feel that you have been wanton, and that you have been smirched. You must divorce me now, of course. I see that. I should never have consented to do what I have done. It is just as wicked as if it had been by my own beastly and incontinent wish. I used to think that purity was of the heart and soul; and that the woman, for instance, who had been taken against her will was as pure as the woman who had never been taken at all. But I was wrong. Facts are facts and they are terrible things. . . . But I don't know why I should deliver you an oration. Won't you have a cup of tea or something?"

"You feel pretty rotten, don't you?" said Diana, shaking her head.

"I do. I should like to die now, except that as I see it, and as all the rest of us see it, except you, and you will the moment the pinch comes, you will need all the money I can give you, so I must stay alive and earn it."

"You know it's perfectly understood that you are not to give me a penny, except maybe just a tiny allowance for Tam."

"That's my entering wedge, dear. The people Tam is to live with must live comfortably. If Tam is to have things as she has always had them, it isn't only clothes, and doctors, and food that count; it's surroundings, a general source of ease and well-being. That she's always had. That she always must have. You will see that I am right when the time comes. You may think that you will enjoy picknicking until a ripe old age. But you won't. You may think that you will enjoy being a real wife and helpmate; I know that is your plan, but you won't. You will never really enjoy being anything but Diana."

The young woman's eyes filled with tears. The bitterness of her husband's words coupled with the gentleness of his voice moved her more than he could have moved her in any other way.

"I thought I'd been a pretty good wife to you. Frank, for a time, anyway."

"My darling," he said, moved in his turn at remembering the wonder of all that young passionate girlhood she had given him, that almost dog-like trust and adoration, the overwhelming generosities, "you were everything in the world to me, love and the heart and soul of love; life and the breath of life. You were like some delicious armful of roses without thorns; and surely some day—oh"—he paraphrased:

> "'My dust would hear you and beat,
> Had I lain for a century dead;
> Would start and tremble under your feet,
> And blossom in purple and red.'"

He paused and stood for quite a long time looking at her, chin on hand. She did not return his look. She

felt that she might lose control of herself if she did. She tried to fix her mind on something quite unrelated to the matter in hand. What she managed to think of was not altogether unrelated—a purple-and-red dress —but it steadied her, and she returned his look.

"But a good wife to me, Diana? That you were *never*. You've helped me wonderfully in lots of ways; but that's not being a good wife. You helped me because you wanted to. And the help grew less precisely as your wish to help grew less, until your wish to help me either ceased entirely or became the empassioned wish to help somebody else. . . . I tell you, upon my soul, Diana, I want you to be happy in your new life. If I didn't, I should let you off by telling you that you were exquisite and charming and adorable; but if you are going to make good with your new husband you'll have to be a lot more things than that.

"I made a little house for you. It was remote and all that; but we loved each other, we had our way to make in the world, and it was a dear and complete little house in a very lovely country, and it was a place where I could work. Will you exonerate me in advance from giving the impression that my work is of any artistic value, or that I so consider it? Compared to the real thing it isn't worth a hang, never was, and never will be, and there is only one chance in a million that it ever might have been. Exonerate me at least from that form of egotism. But to us it was the most valuable thing in the world. It was our bread and butter. It was all we had to go on, our insurance against old age, the guarantee that our children should have a home and education, and a little something to

start life with. But in your realm of life the work counted for nothing. 'Oh, Frank,' you used to tell people, 'is so lucky. He doesn't have to go to a poky office. Wherever he is there his work is.' But a painter, my dear, must have his office just as much as a lawyer must have his. He must work as patiently and methodically and uninterruptedly. Wherever we have been, wherever we did cast our lines I managed to do some sort of work, and it was like pulling teeth, I can tell you. Newport, with dinners and dances. And me up at seven to get some work done, and you sleeping till the roses of which you are made were all pink and fresh again. . . ."

"But you loved that sort of life?"

"Yes. Who wouldn't? Gaiety and attractive people; and money and champagne passing round, and bully times and swimming! I *did* love that life. I have no call to be a painter. God never put his finger on my shoulder and said 'I choose you.' I had to do something, and painting was my best bet. Do you think for a moment I wouldn't rather have spent all of my life having a good time, frolicking and laughing? Of course I would. I loved Newport and Palm Beach and all the hard riding between places; but most of all I loved to see you having a good time. But I knew it was wrong for us to live like that—oh, sometimes it was all right! But it was not all right when we didn't have the money and had to go in hock for our fun. And when I objected you turned cool at once. You said I was making more money every year, why worry? I *was* making more money every year, but how? By doing work—oh, it was as good as I could

do, I guess, but it wasn't the kind of work that paved the way for better work later on. I was in the formative period. I should have been experimenting and studying, instead of swelling around pretending that I had arrived. And you, Diana, shouldn't have made the mistake of giving the best that was in you to other things. You should have given it to the work, not to me, to the work. People have to live for something. We should have lived for the thing that enabled us to live at all. But you didn't. Oh, I am to blame, too," he interrupted a protest that Diana was about to make. "*We* didn't. We went where we wanted to go, lived as we wanted to live. We didn't go where the work wanted to go, or live as the work demanded that we should live. That is our failure; that and not listening to the voices of the little children who wanted to be born, the little children that the work had a right to want. That is where we have failed and why. Of course, you have fallen in love with another man. We hadn't the sweetness of sacrifices offered in common to fall back on."

With the point of view that was characteristic of her, Diana said: "Then I don't see any use in rubbing it in. It can't be helped now."

"Of course it can't—now," said Manners with a slight show of impatience. "And I am not talking for *our* benefit, but for *yours*. You see your welfare, even far off, and utterly beyond my control, touches very closely. You have not been a good wife to me, Di, dear, you know that, don't you?"

"Oh, I suppose I do. But I didn't come to be

scolded. I came because I knew you'd feel terribly, and to say that I am sorry, and to thank you."

But he would not be diverted from his intention to say what was on his mind.

"If I let myself think about Fenn," he said, "I see red and I want to see him punished. He has no excuse. But I say to myself: If Diana wasn't mixed up with him, he is a man you couldn't possibly either like or dislike. If you happened to know him, you certainly wouldn't take the trouble to cross the street to speak with him, so I try to leave Fenn out of my thoughts and calculations. To punish him would punish you. I don't want you punished. I want you to get the most that is possible out of your life. There is only one way, Diana. Do right. Give this fellow a square deal. Don't think that loving him a whole lot for a while is the best you can do. Steel yourself against the night when his passion is still aflame and yours has flickered out. That is one of the great test-moments which decides whether a wife is going to be a success or not. There are other test-moments; when he lays before her some matter in which his whole interest is involved. Try to be interested. When you know that you are spending too much be the first one to say so, and be the one to suggest the ways and means of retrenchment. Don't leave that hellish duty to him. . . ."

"Frank," said Diana a little coldly, for she hated any mention of money matters, "don't you imagine that we'll be able to work these things out for ourselves?"

"Not unless you go to him in the sackcloth and ashes of true penitence. Not unless you see in what

way you have been a waster and profligate both of lives and material. Not unless, when you speak the marriage lines in that beautiful and moving voice of yours, you have some idea what they mean and intend to keep their promises. When you married me you didn't know what you were saying. So I exonerate you, or rather, I forgive you. But if you had known you would simply have been perjuring yourself. This time you will have some idea what you are saying. Don't let it be a perjury. If you promise to love, honor and obey Fenn till death part you, for God's sake do so! You have said to me time and again, 'But how can I love you if I don't love you?' Quibbles like that don't free a woman from responsibility. If I had fallen out of love with you, Diana, you would never have known it from me. So help me God! And if you had suspected, I would have lied and denied until hell froze over. You will do well if you take to your new marriage the code of honor which I brought you in ours."

He was silent. And neither of them spoke for a long time. Then Manners drew close to his wife, and though his fingers hovered near her shoulder, he did not actually touch her.

"I hope, dear," he said, "that I shall never speak another unkind word to you, or think any more unkind thoughts. I have done what you wished me to do, or what it seemed exigent for me to do. You will soon be free. We must not meet often, or the law might suspect us of connivance. If it is better that we should not meet any more at all, you will have your divorce upon unimpeachable grounds. I have not merely furnished evidence, I have broken my marriage vows;

smashed down all the ideals that I had of life and conduct. If I have ever wronged you and sinned against you in other ways I am paying for it now."

She went to the door of the well-remembered room, not with the proud look of a free woman, but with the expression of a child that has been whipped. At the door she turned. He had followed her closely.

"Frank," she said in a queer little voice, "would you like to kiss me good-by?"

She lifted her face, her lips slightly parted.

"That's all right, Di," he said, "that's all right."

He did not kiss her; though it looked for a moment as if he was going to.

"Have you a cab waiting?" he asked. "I'll go down and put you in it."

"No," she said, "don't come down."

He lifted his eyebrows in a kind of mocking interrogation.

"Waiting for you, is he? Waiting for the post-mortem?"

She turned again impulsively.

"Don't—don't be so bitter!" she exclaimed, "*please* don't. I am going through hell."

"I'm sure you are," he said, "sure of it. I'm sorry for you."

So they parted.

When Diana reached the street she crossed at once to the cab from which Ogden Fenn had been watching for her, and from which he had already thrust a foot and leg with the gallant intention of descending to help her in.

"Don't get out," she said impulsively, "please."

He withdrew the tentative foot. She spoke to him in a low voice so that the driver could not hear.

"If you ever want to see me again, for God's sake don't try to say anything to me now. Just go away, go away, *go away!*"

"But when I—Diana——"

"Oh, I'll write, telephone, anything. I don't want to talk to you now."

Her face was white and menacing. It was Fenn's first experience of a Diana in any way different from the tender and confiding Diana whom he loved with all his heart and soul. He gave the driver an address, and drove off badly frightened.

Her husband's words had gone very deep. But she knew without being told that she had not been a good wife to him. And if she was to succeed with her second husband where she had failed with the first, she wished it to be the result of her own initiative, and not of following someone else's advice. Diana, indeed, had the intention of surprising the world by showing the world what a model wife she could be once she made up her mind to it. She had learned a lesson. Given a fresh start, she felt competent to profit by it. She would master her new husband's life in every detail and make it hers. Nor would she, even in the almost inconceivable event of her love toward him cooling, ever, ever, fail him. Now, ordinarily, if Diana had married Fenn, and then cooled toward him she would undoubtedly have failed him as outrageously and with as little show of justice as she had failed Manners. But the circumstances were not ordinary. She was going to marry Fenn in the teeth of general

disapproval and particular opposition. And her determination to stick to him now and hereafter at all costs was no half-baked impulse; but a strongly and bravely calculated scheme of life. It is probable that Diana felt that she could never be happy until she had redeemed herself in her own eyes. Furthermore, it was as if she was fighting with her back to the wall. She would never put anybody in the position of saying, "I told you so." Far rather she would die an assortment of hideous deaths.

She wished that Frank hadn't touched on her wifely conduct toward Fenn. Nobody ought to touch on anything so private. Why not wish her good luck, merely, and be done with it? It is always easier to do right when you make the decision for yourself than when you are goaded into it by advice and entreaty. For one thing it doesn't happen so often.

But it was not resentment that had given Diana the irresistible wish to be alone. The ways and times that had once been so dear had suddenly flooded her memory with grief and tenderness. Fenn had nothing to do with all that. It would hurt him to learn what grieved her so. He must not. She must get the better of those memories, of this sorrow, of this remorse, before she talked with him. She had dismissed him as well as she could, irritably and hysterically; but anything was better than a breakdown. She could explain. She would say that it hadn't been easy to thank her husband or say good-by to him and that she had felt that she simply must be alone for a while. Ogden would surely understand.

Diana turned into the Avenue and walked up, briskly

and with determination, her head high. Nobody would have picked her for a woman who within five minutes had suffered the tortures of the damned. Color came into her cheeks, and the tragic mood passed. She felt a little "let-down," but not much. The high contention and the combat of wills were all over. Nobody would oppose her any more. She had won her fight. There was nothing to do but wait. In order to become Mrs. Ogden Fenn she had only to wait. Her cake had been promised to her and by-and-by she would be at liberty to eat it.

Of course, as in all such passions, it was chiefly the physical Diana that was so attracted to Fenn. She herself was ignorant of this basic fact. There had been moments during this affair when she had longed to give and to be taken; but those moments had been rarer than might be supposed. As she walked briskly up the Avenue, trying to wipe all disagreeable and poignant thoughts from her brain, it occurred to her that perhaps she was never going to be happy. She had a prophetic moment. She visualized herself as already married to Fenn and settled down somewhere. And the woman that she visualized kept saying: "Well, is this all? Why don't you do something to make me blissfully happy? We had that same chintz once in our dining-room at Newport."

"I wonder," she thought dismally, "if it's only opposition and knowing that I mustn't have them that makes me want things?"

At that moment she did not love Fenn, or rather her love for him was in a state of coma. The least trifle of course would have waked it, but it is necessary to

record that during the time which it took her to walk the length of a city block her love for him to all intents and purposes did not exist. And of that fact she was distinctly conscious.

Life-long opposition might have made Diana capable of a life-long love. She was one of those people who are their very best in the defense of others. But where others praised, too, she soon tired of praising, and with those ways along which she met no opposition she was soon bored.

CHAPTER XVIII

A FEW days passed and among the Manners's friends and acquaintances it began to be rumored that a divorce was impending. A number of women who should have known better spoke to Diana about it. They had heard rumors. Of course it wasn't true. Nothing quite so horrid ever was true; but they thought it their duty to tell her what was said. And Diana's punishment began. She had not supposed that getting a divorce would make her feel so conspicuous and self-conscious. She had never had those feelings before and they were not pleasant. The experience made her feel far more guilty of wrong doing than anything her husband had ever said to her. It was a nasty experience. She couldn't see much of Fenn for fear of talk; and more than once she wished that her elopement with him had not proved abortive. Diana's mother made no comments, but she was immensely hostile. Diana felt this and it hurt her. "Right or wrong," she thought, "Mamma ought to be on my side." One day she received a note from Mary Hastings,

"DEAR DI:

I heard that you were getting a divorce, and Frank tells me it's true. This is bad news; but I suppose your mind has been long made up and that you are not

to be dissuaded. I never asked a favor of you. I do now. I want you to tell me where and when I can see you and to promise that you will listen to what I have to tell you. It is something that you ought to know. Could you lunch with me to-morrow? I am very unhappy about this. I love you both so much.

MARY."

Interfering with other people's affairs, even with those of her most intimate friends, was so unlike Mary Hastings that Diana actually went to lunch with her on the following day. Afterward they had coffee under the lovely apple-tree that Frank Manners had painted and had their talk.

"Diana," said Mrs. Hastings, smiling in a disarming way, "I am not going to argue with you. I couldn't if I tried. I know Mr. Fenn. He came here and we talked about you. I believe I tried argument, it was a failure."

"He never told me."

"That's in his favor, he promised that he wouldn't."

"He came to see the porcelains."

"So he thought, and so you thought. He came as a matter of fact to be talked to and scolded. But that's ancient history. He is not your husband yet, and Frank still is. I have wanted to tell you something about Frank and me. He is still your husband and so you ought to know. I have always been very much in love with him."

Diana looked both surprised and entertained. "*You,* Mary? Why I never dreamed of such a thing. And is that why you've always been so nice to me?"

"If I've been nice to you, it's been for your own sake. Are we going to be frank with each other, Diana? What do people say about my marriage with Hastings?"

"That your family bullied you into it."

"Is that what you think?"

Diana nodded briskly.

"And Frank?"

Again Diana nodded.

"They influenced me as much as they could," said Mrs. Hastings, "and I married him. But that is not the point. The point is that I have been a good wife to him. I had no heart to give him, but whatever it was possible to give I have given always. And if I have succeeded in what I set out to do it has been for this reason: I have been able to give in such a way that he has not been ashamed to take. Oh, I know," she excused herself, "I am a very humble person, not at all romantic. I should like to be a free-thinker, and talk about the inalienable right of my soul to make everybody about me miserable. But as a matter of fact, far from being a free-thinker, it is with the greatest difficulty that I manage to think about abstract things at all. And I think," she concluded, "that I have been happier than if I had made Hastings miserable and had a love affair and run off with an affinity."

"But what about Frank?" Diana's interest in Mary Hastings's totally unexpected revelation would not be denied. "Does he . . . ?"

"I think he has always known in his heart. But I never told him, and naturally he never asked. Even," she said, her eyes steadily on Diana's, "even if he had

felt the same about me, he never would have said anything. He couldn't very well. . . . I mean you and I just know that he could never do a thing like that. It would have hurt you so, and Hastings. And it would have been entirely against his code of honor. That's one of the things that hurts him so about you. He feels that a man who could do what poor Mr. Fenn has done is not the kind of man that a good woman ought to marry."

Diana put her coffee cup on the table and started to rise.

"Please—*please* don't be offended," said Mrs. Hastings. "I didn't mean to break the rules. I only wanted to tell you that it is possible to love a man, and do without him, and belong to a man you don't love, and at the same time get enough out of life to make life a thousand times worth living. Oh, it hasn't been a bit easy; and the first of it was terribly, terribly hard. If anybody had asked me in those first years I'd have answered that I was the most wretched, soiled, degraded creature on God's earth. But I wasn't, Diana, not a bit of it."

"You forget, Mary, that you are one woman in ten million, and everybody says so."

Mary Hastings smiled. It pleased her immensely to be told things like that, though she was in truth very humble and did not believe them. She excused herself.

"There was nothing else that I could try. I have no mind, no resources. So I just tried to make things as pleasant as I could for the man I had to live with. I could always tell when he was pleased; and somehow

in time the knowledge that I had given pleasure gave me pleasure. Nothing can stop me now," she cried triumphantly. "I'm headed straight for a happy old age. I'm even very sure that I shall wrinkle pleasantly. Always, my dear, I go to sleep smiling. I've made a point of that for years."

"But," Diana objected, "I don't see where Frank comes in?"

"Only that I fell in love with him soon after I was married. And loving him made the things I had to do seem beyond anybody's nerve or strength. That's how it made them seem, Diana. But really it was the love that I had for Frank that made them worth doing. . . . So many women we know have done what you are doing, Diana. Some of them must have had even better reasons than you have. Are any of them ——" She hesitated, and Diana supplied the rest of the question:

"Going to wrinkle pleasantly?"

"That's *just* what I mean, Diana. Are they? What is the difference between marrying a man you don't love, and finding that you no longer love the man you are married to? Diana, dear, nobody in this world has such a good chance as you have to—wrinkle pleasantly. Oh, I wouldn't stop loving Mr. Fenn. I wouldn't dream of doing that. But I'd tell him that I'd stopped, and I'd tell Frank, and everybody that cares about you the way we all do; and I'd be all the things to Frank that you used to be when you wanted to be them. It was no credit when you wanted to be them; but there would come to you now after a while an inner glow of righteousness, of glorified self-satis-

faction, of duty done, that would soon turn all your mountains into molehills. If only I were a bishop, full of eloquence! If only I could make you see the problems of life as I see them. They are so childishly simple and easy; the way out of every difficulty is so straight and practical. The rewards are so sure. . . ."

Mary Hastings had much more to say now that she had Diana listening to her, though ever so unwillingly. She leaned forward impulsively, her beautiful, tranquil face all aglow with beatitude and resting her fingers lightly on Diana's knee, she said: "Diana, darling—do right."

But Diana's face hardened.

"Mary," she said, "I have never been a good wife to Frank; he says so himself. He told me so the last time I saw him. If I wasn't able to be a good wife to him when I loved him, there's no use trying to be now; the time is past, and there has been too much bitterness. He has said things that I can't forget. That they happened to be true doesn't make it any better. . . . You tell me that all the while you were in love with Frank you were able to give yourself to your husband and to give yourself cheerfully, and my answer to that is simply that you never were in love with Frank, or anybody else. You don't know what love is."

Mary Hastings recognized defeat and accepted it. But Diana, usually so reticent, continued her self-justification.

"I have taken my failures to heart," she exclaimed, "all of them. Don't think that I haven't. And when

I marry the man I love it will be with my eyes open. I shall never make those mistakes again."

"Oh, Diana, if we could only be sure that once you are married to Mr. Fenn you won't fall in love with somebody else."

"No fear," said Diana, "or if I do he will never know it. You may despise me, Mary; I think you do. I don't blame you a bit. Frank does. But I have changed. I am different. I am going to have another chance, and this time I am going to make good. If I don't," there was a kind of defiant fierceness in her voice, "I'll kill myself."

But Diana's sudden excitement kindled none in the beautiful and tranquil Mrs. Hastings.

"You lucky person," she said, "to have two chances!" There was no malice in what Mrs. Hastings said; no thought back of the thought. She actually did think a person was wonderfully lucky to be given two chances, more especially as she herself had never had any. Many people thought that Mrs. Hastings was of a cold and unemotional temperament. As a matter of fact she was not; but she was well-bred and she was good. Even Diana, who knew her intimately, felt that Mrs. Hastings could never have more than a sentimental fancy for a man, and that Mrs. Hastings longed to belong to Frank just as ardently as she longed to belong to Fenn was a proposition which Diana could never have been made to accept.

"When a woman," she said, "feels the way I do about a man, she does things. She has to. That's the way women are made. And if you never felt the same way, it isn't fair to judge harshly."

"But my dear," said Mrs. Hastings, "I know exactly how you feel."

"You can't. Because the other person—Frank—didn't feel the same way, or if he did, and I don't suppose he did, because I think he always truly cared for me, he never told you—so what you had to do was only horrible to you. It wasn't horrible to some one you loved with all your heart and soul. If Frank had loved you the way you loved him you couldn't have gone on . . . you couldn't!"

"This world is full of women who can't and don't, Diana. But I think we'd both be enormously surprised to find how many women there are who can and do. . . . I've tried to show you the beauties of renunciation. And of course I have failed. I wish I hadn't. I wish you didn't have to hurt Frank so."

"If you love him, Mary," said Diana, "how can you want me or any woman to be his wife? I can't understand that. If I couldn't have the man I wanted I'd hate to see anybody else have him."

"It's just as I supposed," said Mrs. Hastings, with mischief in her smile, "when you told me that I didn't know what love was. You meant that *you* didn't know."

Diana rose to her feet, and stood for a few moments looking into the apple-tree which her husband had painted.

"Mary," she said, "people say that Frank might have been a really great painter if it hadn't been for me. I *know* they say that. I've *always* thought it. Perhaps that's why I stopped loving him. We always stop loving the things we injure most. Isn't that true? . . .

Perhaps when he's rid of me he'll be great. And that will be a good thing. . . . Oh, I know you are all against me. You all hope it will turn out badly, and that I'll be unhappy. And I know you don't any of you see the things in Ogden that I see. You don't even think he's attractive. And that only makes me love him the more. Oh, I should think now that you all know that I *must* go on with this that you'd want to help me and make it a success. I think even Frank hopes that I'll be unhappy . . ." She broke off abruptly, and held out her hand.

"Nobody hopes you'll be unhappy, Diana," said Mrs. Hastings. "We're afraid. That's all. You see a woman can only give all that she has to give once. It's the same with a man. That is what makes the step you are taking seem so desperate. Of course you're happy now. . . ."

"Happy!" exclaimed Diana. "How can I be happy when I am making everybody wretched, and being disapproved of and read lectures? But I am going to be happy. I *will* be."

When Diana had gone, Mary Hastings telephoned at once to Mrs. Langham. It was apparent that Mrs. Langham had been expecting the call.

"Could you do *anything* with her?" she asked.

"I made a complete failure, Mrs. Langham. I'm awfully sorry. I did really think I could do some good; but I only succeeded in making her feel that everybody is against her and hopes she'll be unhappy. Have you said nothing to her?"

"Not a word," said Mrs. Langham. "She knows

that I disapprove; and we have tacitly agreed not to discuss the matter."

"But you won't let her go through with this without making one effort to save her? *Please* don't. She might listen to you. She admires *you* more than she admires anyone; and the fact that you haven't said anything ought to count. It will seem so much more momentous when you do. Frank thinks that you ought to talk to her. But he won't ask you to himself. He has an idea that Diana isn't as happy and carefree as she expected to be, that she's in a fine state of balance and that just the right word from the right person might make her tip the right way. You *will* try, won't you?"

"Yes," said Mrs. Langham, "I'll try."

"May I tell Frank that you are going to talk to her? He was so despondent when I saw him. Even if you can't change her, it would always be easier for Frank if he knew that you had tried."

Mary Hastings never knew how much her words had affected Diana. Diana had been outwardly defiant and illogical. But deep in her mind grave doubts had begun to express themselves humbly and with logic. Could she give up Fenn? Could she *not* give him up? Those who had a right to talk to her were all against her. Even the great love that she had for Fenn made her no friends at court. The more she loved him, the more beautiful the renunciation would be. The voice that was speaking deep in her mind kept saying: "This love will pass, as your other loves have passed. When that happens you would give the world to undo what by that time you will have done.

You will tire of Fenn. He will bore you one of these days. And the more you dwell on the things that you have given up for his sake the less you will like him. Would a real man have made love to you behind a kind and loving husband's back? The kind of man you really like is the kind of man that men like. That kind of man doesn't do the kind of thing that Fenn has done. He is a woman's man."

And the old nursery rime began to run in her head, and she couldn't mistake the boy who plays the chief part for anyone but Ogden Fenn; and that angered her, because she loved Fenn, and was loyal to him, and he was a hero to her.

> "Georgie Porgie, pudding and pie,
> Kissed the girls and made them cry,
> When the boys came out to play,
> Georgie Porgie ran away."

Georgie Porgie *did* look like Fenn. There was no question about that, or else it was Fenn who looked like Georgie Porgie. The chief resemblance was between the mouths. Both had fine teeth, and rather full, flexible, shining lips.

She picked up a roving taxi at Fifty-ninth Street and drove to the Pennsylvania Station. She just made her train. She had to scamper to make it, and the current of her thoughts changed. She began very seriously to consider the possibility of dropping the divorce proceedings, confessing her faults and asking her husband to forgive her and take her back. A thousand things that had seemed difficult, viewed from this new angle, became easy. She had only to surrender and all the bridges would be crossed for

her. Frank would work with renewed enthusiasm; they could take up together the somewhat neglected matter of Tam's education. Mrs. Langham, Mary Hastings, Peter, all their friends would be so glad. She could think of having good times again, instead of preparing to give them all up. There would be no break-up of their household, no horrible sorting out of possessions. Oh, she wanted to marry Fenn, and for his sake she was ready to call the world well lost; but did the man for one moment realize what a horrible nuisance it all was?

She reached home in a state of indecision. On the hall table was a note from Fenn. She carried it up to her room and laid it unopened on her dressing-table. She did not wish to listen to him now. She was going to decide something. She felt sure of that. When she had decided she would read what her lover had to say. Suppose she decided against him? She ought to. She knew that. She was fond of her husband, and he had never wronged her. To throw him over merely because she was in love was criminal. She knew that. To throw Fenn over would not be criminal; and it would hurt her as much as it could hurt him. It was the kind of hurting which they both deserved.

While she dressed for dinner she had Tam to visit with her. The day had been hot, and Tam's mind had been running on sea-bathing. She had her parent's love for salt water.

"Mumsey," she asked, "are we going to Newport; because it's getting to be *so* hot? Even Grandma says so."

"It isn't summer yet," said Diana, "and honestly we haven't decided. We don't know just what we are going to do."

She had a wild impulse to speak her mind out to her child; and of course resisted it. She might have said:

"Tam, I'm tired of father, and I am going to live with Mr. Fenn. Mr. Fenn isn't rich and I'll have to live in the city most of the time where his business is. Of course, you'll live with us; because a little daughter needs her mumsey and all that, and then in a year or two you'll be old enough to go to school. But nothing will be quite the same. You see, wherever father goes his work is with him; but Mr. Fenn isn't so lucky. If he didn't stay in the city most of the time he wouldn't have any money at all. Of course, I'm not going to be married to him till next winter, and perhaps I shall take you to Newport for a while; some where, anyway, where there's bathing. . ." and she might have said a good deal more.

"Am I ever going to be able to justify myself in the eyes of this child?" thought Diana. "Yes, when she knows what love is. Then she will understand and sympathize. But in the meanwhile I can't even try to explain or justify myself. Oh, the questions she will ask at first! And perhaps it won't only be at first. She is very tenacious. And if Ogden and I don't make her happy all the time, she will remember how happy her father could always make her. And then Ogden and I will have our punishment living in the same house with us."

"Tam," said Diana, "come here."

They made a charming picture in the mirror over the dressing-table; but neither of them saw it. Diana looked Tam very earnestly in the eyes and Tam returned the look.

"Which do you love better, Father or Mother?"

Tam would not answer. She flung her arms around Diana and buried her face against her.

"She loves her father more," thought Diana, "and she won't hurt my feelings by saying so, the darling. And it does hurt my feelings."

"But you love your Mumsey a whole lot, don't you?"

The pressure of the little arms increased and the face made a bowing motion. Diana could feel the little button of a nose pressing into her breast. . . How, when he was tired and discouraged, the child's father had loved to lay his head just there! How he would love to now, poor fellow! To have and to hold . . . to love and obey. . . till death . . .

"You're hurting Mums."

"I 'spec I was just loving you too much."

"Now this is good-night, and then run tell Grandma good-night and tell her I'll be down in a few minutes."

"Is Fahzer coming?"

"Not to-night."

"When?"

"He'll be coming out to see you soon, I expect. Now scamper."

Diana and her mother dined briefly, and talked on a variety of topics, in which neither of them was very

much interested at the moment. Shortly after dinner Diana began to think about Fenn's note and wonder what was in it. Just love and admiration of course. and longing; but she thought that he had a very felicitous and varied gift for saying such things. She was sure that he thought more about her soul than her body. And for some unknown reason, since both were part of her and she was responsible for neither, this thought had an immense power of flattery.

She sat in a corner of the big sofa with her little feet tucked under her. She was just being polite. She had nothing to say to her mother. Her mother was against her. Mrs. Langham busied herself with a piece of knitting; and watched Diana covertly. Diana suppressed a yawn, and Mrs. Langham put her knitting down.

"My dear child," she said, "I suppose you are sick to death of being talked to, and advised; but after all I'm your mother."

"And I've counted on you," said Diana, "to go through to the bitter end without saying a word. Must you? I *know* you hate it. I know you think it's wicked and I know I'm not going to change. So what *is* the use?"

"It's because you have a daughter of your own," said Mrs. Langham. "Very likely she will turn on you one of these days, and say what *is* the use? And if you haven't listened to me, you'll have no right to make her listen to you, and you'll be sorry."

"It seems that I am going to be sorry for everything," said Diana wearily. "Everybody says so, except Ogden and me. We think there is such a thing

as a love that can make up to a woman for all the things she is bound to lose. You're not going to argue and plead, are you?"

"I won't promise not to argue. That is an old woman's prerogative. I never have pleaded with you or with anyone else. I sha'n't begin now. You feel somewhat isolated, don't you, Diana? You feel as if you were going through unprecedented experience. You might even feel as if Fate had been unjust in singling you out as the one woman who through a great passion is doomed to make her family and friends wretched. . . . When, as a matter of fact, what you are suffering is just as common as is the way in which you are seeking relief. You are not unique. Most married women betray their husbands either in word or in deed or in thought. And each married woman thinks that her particular excuse for doing so is the only really sacred and transcendental passion since Antony and Cleopatra. The whole world is seething with loves like yours and Fenn's. Yours is just a drop in the great bucket, neither more worthy, nor less. Less, because it was more of your seeking than the man's."

"It's all very well to theorize," said Diana ironically, "but how can you know? You of all people? You, the shyest and most conventional person in the world. You talk as if you'd been a famous flirt."

"I was in my heart," said Mrs. Langham; "all women are. But I was not theorizing. I have had my little tragedy, too."

"You!" exclaimed Diana. She was shocked, horrified, skeptical, hopeful, almost delighted. She had

never felt so close to her mother. Mrs. Langham laughed, blushed a little and bit her lip.

"Yes," she said simply, "I had my eternal passion, just as you are having yours. Perhaps it was even more of an eternal passion than yours; for yours is comparatively young still, and mine, oh, mine lasted for a great many years."

"Did you want to divorce my father?"

"Of course I wanted to. I wanted to abandon all you children. I wanted to fly to the ends of the world, to forget the world, to be forgotten by it. I yearned if anything to make the affair as scandalous as possible. . . ."

"Oh, Mamma," said Diana, and she was as interested as a child might be in a thrilling ghost-story, "*What* did you do?"

"The affair," said Mrs. Langham, "came to a head one Sunday, when everybody had gone to church except me—your father, the servants, the children—everybody. I lay on the floor in my room and screamed and kicked and bit . . . I was entirely out of my head. Quite crazy. It's often like that. Have you had any fits with yours?"

"But, Mamma!" Diana waived the question impatiently . . .

"Mine," said Mrs. Langham imperturbably, "was mixed with jealousy. You may thank your stars and garters that yours isn't. And I had no excuse. The man wasn't really in love with the person I was jealous of. He was wonderfully fond of her, and eventually his fondness did become love—real love—not

fits—and he married her; but at the time, why she wasn't even grown up. She was only a little child."

"But how could he care for her and for you too?"

"I never said that he cared for me. It was I who cared for him." Again she laughed and blushed. "I used to listen and watch, and long and hope. And when he came it was a bright-blue warm day and when he didn't come it was cold and dark. My dear, this man was ten years younger than I! Can you think of anything more degrading, more ridiculous! I was thirty, a matron with children; but my mind worked like that of a silly sentimental school-girl. . . . Oh, but it hurt! I can tell you it hurt. . . ."

"Mary told me an experience she'd had," said Diana, "I know you won't repeat it to anyone so it's all right for me to tell you. And the man didn't love her, either. So don't you see my case *is* different. If Ogden didn't care for me, or didn't even know that I cared for him, why I dare say I'd have to struggle along somehow and make the best of things. But he *does* know, and he *does* care. That's the point."

"He didn't always know," said Mrs. Langham. "He needn't have known. He needn't have dared to care."

Diana's eyes fell presently before the challenging and somewhat contemptuous look in her mother's.

"You were restless," said Mrs. Langham, "and you sought trouble and you found it. . . . Well, I didn't expect you to profit by my experience. But I thought it right for you to know that your mother had suffered as you are suffering."

Diana rose.

"Thank you for telling me, Mamma. I don't suppose any two cases are exactly alike, are they? Would you like me to say that I think I'm pretty rotten; because I do . . ."

"You have only to do as a well-bred woman should," said Mrs. Langham, "and though your love for Ogden Fenn may never die, the knowledge that you have been just and high-minded as a gentlewoman should be will kill all the suffering. I *know* it."

Mrs. Langham had also risen.

"You were just ten when I fell in love," she said. "That was a long time ago."

"Twenty years," acknowledged Diana. "That's just how old I was when Frank says he fell in love with me, and made up his mind that he was going to marry me when I grew up."

"It's curious, isn't it," said Mrs. Langham, "to think that I was ever jealous of you. But I was. I didn't get over it till you were nearly grown. Did I ever show it?"

"Jealous of *me,* Mamma? I don't know what you mean."

"Your father," said Mrs. Langham, "loved youth. He loved to have the younger men about him; they loved to come to our house. Frank was one of your father's friends. He came to us a great deal. It seemed it was on your account. But I thought . . . Oh, what a fool I was, that it was on my account. . ."

"Do you mean to tell me that Frank was the man . . . *my* husband? Diana felt chilled and shocked.

"It seems horrible to you, Diana. You think of me as I am now, an old grandmother. But I was only

thirty then. Just your age. Think what a silly child *you* have been, dear, and make allowances . . . I have never gotten over loving your husband. That is why I can't talk to you without prejudice. . . . I have never let it hurt anyone but me. . . . Frank hasn't been hurt; your father was not hurt; you have not been hurt. That is my reward; to feel that I have been man enough to see that my own failure hurt nobody but me."

"But, Mamma dear, our cases are not at all the same. What else could you do if the man didn't know or care."

'I could have given him a chance to care," said Mrs. Langham. "Perhaps I could have made him care. Plainer women than I was have done more extraordinary things. . . . Diana, my dear daughter, what you are determined on is as foolish as it is undignified and common. It will bring you no happiness. Perhaps Mr. Fenn will be happy, who knows? Perhaps poor Frank will find some sort of happiness. Perhaps Tam will not be as much hurt as I think she will be. I'm too old to matter. But I tell you very solemnly, Diana, there is no possible happiness for you unless you do right."

"How could Frank and I ever live together again," said Diana, "after this dreadful Mrs. Herriot . . . ?"

"I think Frank would have to sink very low into the very deepest slime before you would have the right to reproach him."

"Of course I have no right. I have pushed him under. I know that. But these things don't go by

right or by wrong. They go by some fastidious instinct. . . ."

"It would be really funny," said Mrs. Langham, "if you were to find out some day that Mrs. Herriot had once been one of Mr. Fenn's women . . ."

"Mamma! How can you!"

"You had the luck to marry one Galahad," said Mrs. Langham curtly. "You needn't expect to find another in every little bounder you happen to fall in love with."

Savage words leapt to Diana's lips; but she bit them back, and after staring at her mother for a moment, as if at some stranger who had been rude to her, she turned and left the room.

She thought over Fenn's little note. All he said was that he had neither friends nor family, only Diana; and yet the world seemed full of wonderful and friendly people. She clasped it to her heart, no not to hers. It was not hers, nor Tam's, nor Frank's. It had never been Frank's. Never! Perish the thought. It was Fenn's. All of her was Fenn's. There had been no other man. That was all a bad dream. Love had made her all over from top to toe. She was brand-new.

And she lay in the dark with the note clasped tight. And she said: "And I haven't any friends either or any family or anything; but because I have your love the world seems all full of friendly people."

And presently the poor little love-sick fool fell asleep and the precious note slipped from her breast to the bed and from the bed to the floor.

Sic transit gloria mundi.

CHAPTER XIX

Over-stimulation both by alcohol and tobacco, insomnia and the increasing certainty of his belief that if he had done differently matters would never have come into this terrible pass, literally stripped the flesh from Frank Manners's bones. He should have gone into the country somewhere with a trainer. He should have given up all forms of stimulation and exercised his body at the expense of his imagination. A wise doctor would have prescribed just this for him; but he did not consult a doctor, and merely followed along the lines of the least resistance.

This, however, kept him in the open air a good deal. He fell heir to the racing car in which his cousin had so nearly driven Ogden Fenn to his death, and forthwith developed a mania for distances and speed. He had felt some compunction at accepting so valuable a present even from Peter Manners, but his objections had been over-ridden. And when he found that at first anyway, driving the car fast gave him periods of mental relaxation akin to sleep he was delighted with its acquisition.

You may not care whether you live or die, but you cannot drive fast over the average American roads without giving considerable attention to their blind corners, to the grafters who build them, to the lovely landscapes which continually stream past, and of course to "the fool in the other car."

Frank Manners knew a vast number of people well, and he formed a habit of inviting himself to lunch at their houses. And hostesses, even if the luncheon happened to be a carefully balanced and formal affair, an even number of men and women seated just so, were always delighted to have an extra place squeezed in for a man who, if not actually famous, was widely known and distinguished, and who, especially of late, brought an immense energy into the conversation, and greatly helped others to appear at their best.

He had friends all over Long Island and Westchester County, at Bernardsville, Tuxedo and Morristown. He liked to arrive just when the cocktails were brought in. After a long, fast drive there's only one thing better than a cocktail for setting a heart-broken man's tongue merrily wagging and that's two cocktails. Sometimes he had the second one first. He might have it at some country club of which he was a member, or at some private house where he had intended to lunch, only to find that the owners were lunching somewhere else, and that the butler was an old friend, or he might stop at some roadhouse. Then when he arrived for lunch the cocktail that should have been the first found a jolly companion waiting for it and people who had known him for years declared that it dumfounded them to find that he had so much wit and mischief in him. He developed a delightful faculty of making the wicked and irrational thing appear to be the logical thing, the Christian thing, and the wise.

The pleasant, insidious, deadly cocktail habit grew upon him. Upon starting back to town he began soon

to find that he had not had quite enough to drink with his lunch, and to stop here and there to remedy the deficiency. So it came about that across a little glass or so of white wine, or claret, or a whiskey and soda, the jolly opportunist cocktails that were in him often found themselves shaking hands with those scheming and virulent malefactors, white mint and brandy.

Now and again the cocktails that he had drunk before lunch had enough life left to utter dying messages to the cocktails which he drank before dinner, and these in their turn, and doubtless upon the advice received in the dying messages, formed wild and inconsidered friendships with divers pints of brut champagne.

Some nights he returned to his apartment with the idea that he could paint again, and that he would begin in the morning. Often he returned with the feeling that he had not had quite enough to drink. The whisky that he learned to drink by himself sometimes affected him like opium. Sometimes it divorced his thoughts entirely from the things that troubled him. Here lay the danger. In those hours of chance quittance he would have risked hell, and indeed he did. During those periods of genuine hallucination he seemed to find in his own thoughts and character beauties which he had never even suspected in other people's thoughts and characters; beauties and abilities and short-cuts. He dreamed wonderful dreams. And after the dreams he would tumble into bed and actually lose consciousness. If the whiskey could have done just those things for him, and nothing else, he might

have had some slight justification in drinking so much and so often. It has perhaps in its day actually helped a man here and there over some very hard place, relaxed his mind in time to keep it from snapping. But it did not help Frank Manners. For the one time that it soothed him and sent him peacefully to sleep, it excited him two times and kept him awake, smarting with injustice and jealousy, dark and vengeful.

But I have no wish to exaggerate his lapse of habit and character. It was only now and then that he got going too hard, and ended his day, quiet enough and even dignified to the eye, but potentially very much upset in the stomach, and very drunk in the mind. No one saw him drunk—not till several months after the divorce, and it was not for a long time that the notion got about that he was drinking hard.

Life, he believed, would be more tolerable if only he could be more of an average man and rid himself of those wild-goose instincts which had been born in him. "Some night surely," he thought, "I shall think how pretty she is, how desirable, how affectionate, and my thoughts will stop there. I shall not feel like a hound and a traitor."

But things did not fall out as he hoped, and when he realized that they were never going to be he wanted to break with Mrs. Herriot. But he was too kind-hearted, and, while she remained in love with him, he could not expect to find any ready-made excuse. He began to fear that after the divorce Mrs. Herriot might want him to marry her. But he need not have worried. Mrs. Herriot's varied experience had taught her a good deal of horse-sense. Good women, she knew,

sometimes acquire position and standing by marrying the male Herriots of the world; but the man, good or bad, who marries the female Herriot is lost. If Mrs. Herriot ever married again she would marry some man who had money and no position. That was her only chance. Meanwhile, because he seemed to love her and didn't, Mrs. Herriot was quite madly in love with Frank Manners, so much so, indeed, that it seemed impossible that she should take money from him. But she took the money and solaced herself with the thought that if she hadn't taken it she couldn't have afforded to be faithful to him.

Often when he knew that Diana was elsewhere (Mrs. Langham kept him posted) Manners drove out to Westbury and spent patient hours with Tam. These were priceless hours for Tam, but for her father there was hell mixed with the heaven of them. It was impossible that the child should not come to harm and through his own fault.

"There are things that simply cannot be got around," he said once to Mrs. Langham. "I was older than Diana, she loved me with all her might. I *didn't* keep her love, and I *didn't* make her happy."

"You *couldn't* keep her love, you mean," Mrs. Langham had retorted quite sharply, "and you *couldn't* make her happy."

"No," said Manners, "that *isn't* what I mean; I *didn't*. Once I was served with a glass of tokay worth a dollar a drop, I hit the top of the long-stemmed glass with my sleeve and spilled the stuff all over the table. Now, I didn't *have* to do that. But I did it. You see you're down on Diana. I'm not. You think

she was just naturally doomed to be unhappy through her folly. But there were splendid qualities in Diana. No, you don't know. And she trusted the shaping of them to me, and glory; what a botch I've made of it."

"She gave you her character to shape, and trusted you completely until the moment when you suggested something sensible and possibly self-sacrificing; no *surely* self-sacrificing as all sensible things are; and then she very promptly took back her trust and her character and proceeded to shape the latter for herself. It's too bad it's not a shape that can be seen with the eye. She would have too much sense of humor to let it stay on exhibition."

"You don't know Mrs. Langham. More and more I recall things that I have done to hurt her. They seemed very little at the time; but mountainous now and far-reaching."

On another occasion Mrs. Langham said to him:

"Everybody of course knows now that Diana is getting a divorce. People who knew you both are serenely sure that it is a put-up job. What do you *wish* said?"

"I don't want the matter minced in any way," said Manners. "I wish the people who are so cocksure to be jolted into uncertainty. It is infinitely better for Diana and Tam that people should believe that I have treated Diana very badly for a long time. . . . As indeed I have, since I had her love and her happiness in my keeping and kept neither. But don't say that. Say this: 'Diana is too proud to stand being treated badly, she stood it as long as she could.' "

"But that is flagrant, downright lying."

"The cause is good. I may never find peace and entertainment in this world. But it must be a living hell for me unless Diana is given every chance to find the happiness that I could not give her. . . . I'm so worried about what she may do or say to hurt her chance. Somehow I can't imagine her letting people abuse me. . . . Does she see much of Fenn?"

"Very little. She realizes that she has dealt herself a very difficult hand and she is trying to make every card count."

"She talks about that?"

"Yes, she actually came to me for advice and took some of it. She said: 'Mamma, the premises may not be pretty, but accept them, since they are the premises, and tell me just what you would do if you were in my place? I told her that she should drop Mr. Fenn entirely so far as seeing him goes, and that six months or so after the divorce she could meet him, say at Mary Hastings's house in the country at a week-end party. That she shouldn't seem very much taken with him at first, etc. But she objected to that. Too many people have seen them together. She agreed, though, that Mary shall, if agreeable, seem to take a fancy to him and have him about a good deal.' "

"Will she marry him inside of a year?"

"Yes, I think she will."

"Suppose—oh, suppose that after the divorce and before the year is up, suppose she falls out of love with him, what would she do?"

Somehow he built up the vague hope that Mrs. Langham's answer would be comforting; but it was not.

"It's my opinion," she said, "that already Diana is not so frantically in love with him as she was. The vase was very pretty in the shop window, but now that the parcel has come home and been opened, and the vase tried here and there in familiar surroundings it doesn't look quite right. But—it is my conviction, Frank, that Diana will go on with this no matter what happens. I think that she is going to be a brave victim on the altar of false pride. She is determined that no one shall ever say to her, 'we told you so, Diana—your love *wasn't* eternal after all. It was just fits. We knew that all along.' "

"If she marries a man that she doesn't love," said Manners gravely, "and makes good, so that he doesn't find out, and nobody finds out—there is hope for her."

"She is very determined to make a success of this marriage. She talks very sensibly and cold-bloodedly about money. Into the contempt that I feel for her, I must admit that there is sneaking a certain admiration."

The full import of what Mrs. Langham had said weighed very heavily on Manners, and he could not hold back the bitterness which he felt.

"She is going to be for him all the things that she couldn't be for me!" he said.

Mrs. Langham touched his coat-sleeve with the tips of her fingers.

"My dear boy," she said, "that is what we must both hope, isn't it?"

"Of course," he said, "of course we do hope it. And so you see I was right after all. She *has* splendid qualities!" He tried to look triumphant and failed.

"Yes," said Mrs. Langham, but once more in the dry and precise voice which was natural to her, "and so has the murderer if he goes bravely to the gallows."

Neither the wine nor Mrs. Herriot had the power to comfort Frank Manners, and no more had the thought that he had been right about Diana's splendid qualities, and that she would be to Fenn, whether she loved him or not, all things that she should have been to him. This thought indeed hurt him as hardly another thought had the power to hurt. Once indeed he started to find her to tell her how that thought hurt him and how unjust it was for her to have learned how to be brave and fine and self-sacrificing entirely at his expense. But he only started. He only rose from his chair, and the wet crash of a tall glass that had been standing on the arm of it reminded him that it was three o'clock in the morning.

It had been one of those nights when his thoughts had done nothing but hound along on the trail of the injustice that had been done him. It was now the morning of the day on which Diana was to receive an interlocutory decree of divorce, to become final in all probability at the end of six weeks. But Manners did not know this. He knew only in a general way that something definite was to be decided soon. Still, he had the feeling that if Diana was to be moved from her purpose by any eleventh-hour appeal he had no time to lose.

She was at home he knew, and he remembered the telephone on the table by the head of her bed, and he wondered if by any chance she had forgotten to disconnect it for the night. She often did, and com-

plained bitterly, if the thing rang and waked her. Should he telephone or not? He would think it over.

He mixed himself a fresh drink and placed it on the arm of his chair, first moving the chair to avoid the wet and jagged mess which the overturned and broken glass had made on the floor. When he waked his legs and body felt very cold, and the drink on the arm of his chair no longer bubbled. But he had not really slept; he had only nodded. It was not yet four. He remembered that he had been about to speak to his wife over the telephone. Had he spoken to her? He knit his brows hard and tried to remember. No, he had not spoken to her, not for ages. They were no longer on speaking terms. He had wronged her, insulted the very kernel of her womanhood. He had preferred another woman to her. He had been unfaithful. He walked to the telephone, very steadily, and gave the number of his house at Westbury.

It seemed only a crumb of time before the voice he loved so well was sounding in his ear. "It's I—Frank," he said.

She had no hint of his state from the quality of his voice. She only knew that something was wrong with him. Her instant surmise was that he had done something terrible to himself, and that he had waked her at that unearthly hour to say good-by. She quaked with fear and horror, but her voice was cool and practical.

"What is the matter, Frank?"

His first words were ominous.

"*Please* forgive me," he began . . .

Diana kicked off the bedclothes, and swung her legs over the side of the bed.

"What have you *done?*"

"Done—why, I've waked you, and I had no business to, only I couldn't help it. . . ."

Diana's heart rose high and sank low. A profound sigh of relief whispered in her nostrils.

"I can't sleep," he went on, "I can't ever sleep. . . . Oh, Di, darling, do for pity's sake not go on with this thing. Nobody will ever love you the way I love you. If I've done you wrong and wrong and wrong, haven't I been punished enough? How can you hurt me so much, when I was once so dear to you?"

The distress, the childlike distress, in his voice moved her very much, and though she was not in the least inclined to give in to his wishes, she found it very difficult to say so.

One of the shoulder-straps of her night-gown had slipped so that Diana's left breast was almost wholly bare. At her husband's next words she hastily pulled the nightgown back into place, as she might have done if he had stepped suddenly into view.

"I could crawl to you on my hands and knees," he said, "if I could lay my head on your breast just one little moment."

"Frank," she exclaimed, "I *am* so sorry! But please, *please*—this is no time to discuss what's been and gone and happened. Do go back to bed. . . . Count the sheep going over the hurdle. . . . Don't you know I'd do anything—anything—anything—except the things I *can't* do? . . ."

There was a long silence. Then the man spoke again.

"Do have pity," he said, "for Christ's sake!"

"Frank," she said, with a sudden note of authority, "I can't bear this. I'll say anything you wish me to. I'll make any promise you like. It will be because I am frightened. It will be under compulsion. Even if I held myself bound, even if I tried to keep the promise, I shouldn't be able to. . . . Please don't interrupt. I want to tell you something. I couldn't say it to you or write it. I think I have given you about the rawest and rottenest deal a woman ever gave a good husband. I went after Ogden for all I was worth. I was going to upset him just a little if I could, and then I was going to have fun with somebody else. He is not a bit to blame. No more than you are. I got caught in my own snare, and I went crazy mad. I'd give anything in the world if I had behaved myself always and not made misery for everybody including myself. I am at your feet, Frank, in sackcloth and ashes, asking you for God's sake to forgive me, and to lay your kind strong hands on my head and give me your blessing and tell me to go my way."

The voice that came back to her was manly and vibrant. It was the voice of some strong person prepared to defend the weak.

"Don't say such things, Diana. I won't have it. I won't let anyone abuse you. I won't even let you abuse yourself. I'm so ashamed of myself for waking you and making fresh trouble for you that I don't know what to do. You've just got to forgive me and

forget all about it. It isn't *like* me. It isn't characteristic. Mostly I'm all right, and you needn't worry about me. But sometimes at night, or in the morning, like this I seem to develop a yellow streak. . . . Now are you all right? You'll go right to sleep again? I'm no Indian giver, Di. Never fear it. I have given you your freedom, and I pray God you find happiness."

Diana lay for a long time staring at the ceiling.

"What a fool I am," she thought; "why couldn't I admit in the first place that I'd been wicked? Frank would have done nothing, but forgive me and urge me to divorce him as fast as he could talk. It's pretending that you are right when you know perfectly well you are wrong that infuriates people more than anything else. . . ."

Diana had done more than disarm her husband. She had given him the feeling that he had been magnanimous. The more he thought of how she had blamed herself the less he found himself blaming her. Between the gravity of the interlocutory and the final decrees, he found not only the wish but the courage to paint a picture.

CHAPTER XX

It has been remarked that little Mrs. Herriot was too wise to marry a man like Frank Manners; but when the divorce had been made final she had the curiosity to hint at making their relations permanent in order to see what he would say.

The hot summer was over and he had taken her for a long run up the Hudson to see the first flashes of autumn color. He was a free man now, free to marry whom he chose, free to make a new life for himself. But he was not really free. The law could not make him stop loving, and though Diana had said that she could not take a penny of his money and that Tam was to be shared equally between them, still the fact remained that her lawyers had so confused her intentions and understanding that the Court ended by awarding her a heavy alimony and the absolute custody of the child.

As to the causes which had led to the rupture between Manners and his wife, Mrs. Herriot could never satisfy herself. She knew very well that the gentle, affectionate man whose mistress she was loved some other woman. She believed that he still loved the woman who had been his wife. And once, because she was naturally good-hearted and generous, she had said: "Look here, Frank, are you sure there's no way you can make it up with her?"

He had answered, "I am living entirely in the pres-

ent, and the future. That this is so is entirely my fault. That's enough for even a very sweet and trustworthy little person to know."

"But you'd give your soul to be back where you were?"

He did not answer.

"Tell me one thing, Frank. Did she fall in love with another man?"

Precisely as the gay old gentleman in the play chucks the pretty parlor-maid under the chin so Frank Manners chucked pretty Mrs. Herriot, and in addition laughed at her.

"Suppose you stop trying all these short-cuts to knowledge," he said, "and go by the regular twisty-wisty road? In short, read the newspapers. They will tell you that Mr. Manners has wronged Mrs. Manners, that there is a woman in the case, but that it has not been necessary to name her. If you think there is more to the case than that, suppose you go direct to the referee and ask him."

One night when he had had a good deal to drink and was sleeping very heavily, she had the temerity and the curiosity to go through his clothes. Two letters in his inside pocket told her nothing. In his change-pocket she found one of those twenty-dollar gold pieces which have been transformed into lockets. She got it open, and found a little picture of Diana and Tam. And they told her nothing that she didn't pretty well know. And she crept back into bed thinking what a fool she was. "He had only to wake," she thought, "and see me with my hand in his pocket to pass me up."

The Catskills showed more gold and red than were to be expected so early in the fall. The day was serene and perfumed in the early morning; but toward noon it became hazy and sultry, and when they came out of the little road-house in which they had eaten lunch there was a fine sky-line of thunder-heads above the western horizon.

But Mrs. Herriot was for going on.

"It will be a hard shower maybe," she said, "we'll find shelter somewhere and afterward the air will be simply too delicious."

She proved a prophet. There was a hard shower, and the nearest shelter when it broke was Ogden Fenn's little house near Combers.

The house had the deaf-and-blind look of uninhabited houses in general; but smoke rose from the caretaker's.

And Manners, being remembered, and being supposed to be a friend of Mr. Fenn's, was at once admitted. Shutters were opened for him and a fire built in the big room. The rain roared on the roof. The caretaker withdrew, and Mrs. Herriot said that it was a gorgeous adventure and that the house was a perfect duck.

"Is Mr. Fenn a great friend of yours?" she asked.

"I think a good deal of him," said Manners.

She accepted his words at their face value.

"Is he married?"

"No."

"He must be nice to have such a nice house. But if you aren't married, I don't see any point in having a house. I believe in flats and suites for the unmated.

"It's tough luck," she went on, "when a woman knows that she's behaved so she can't be anybody's wife, and knows at the same time that she could be all kinds of a good wife if she could only have another chance."

"It *is* tough luck," said Manners simply. "It's the toughest kind of luck."

"If it weren't for *people,*" Mrs. Herriot said, "if a man's always had people, why sooner or later those people are necessary to him again. I think," she said demurely, "that if it weren't for that I'd propose to you, Frank."

She looked the room up and down. "If you cut a big window through that north wall, wouldn't this make an A1 studio?"

"It would."

"Well, couldn't you work in a place like this, and forget all about people?"

"I might work, and very likely I should soon forget about some people."

"Oh, I'm not *really* proposing," she said, "but I believe I would if you loved me."

She sighed and looked very pretty and innocent. His eyes had a pleasant smile for her.

"Oh, I know what you are thinking," she said. "But it *is* possible. I am what I am. I've been what I've been. There's no getting around it. But I don't look it, do I? It doesn't show. I'm not a fool. I see straight. Sometimes when I look at myself in the glass I say: 'Young woman, you *look* as if you had everything to learn.' . . . I wish I had, Frank. I wish I had."

"I wish so, too, my dear," he said gravely.

She walked to a window and looked out. The steep road that passed near the house was a torrent. The rain showed no sign of letting up. She returned to the fire.

"Will you do me a favor, Frank?"

"Of course."

"Will you pretend that we've just moved in? I've rice in my hat, and you've built the house as a surprise for me."

"That's right," he said.

"I think," she speculated, "that the first thing you'd do when we got inside the door would be to take me in your arms and kiss me."

He did this at once, and with much gallantry.

"And then," she said, "I'd take off my hat, and you'd show me all over the house."

She took off her hat, patted her hair which was always tidy, and looked expectant.

Frank Manners then began to enter into the game. He showed her over the house. They went into the cellar and the attic. But it was with great reluctance that he pushed open the door of the room that had been Diana's on the night of the abortive elopement, and in which he had pleaded with her, and almost won her back into his keeping. On the bureau lay a pair of wash-leather gloves. He remembered now that she had left her gloves, but had refused to turn back for them.

Mrs. Herriot tried on the gloves; almost they had still the shape of Diana's hands.

"Well, of *course!*" she exclaimed, "Mr. Fenn is a

bachelor, but—" she tossed the gloves disdainfully back on the bureau—"some young chicken's, I suppose," was her comment.

Manners's face became very grave. But she did not see this, for her back was turned to him.

"There's one more room," he said.

"It's not as nice as the other," observed Mrs. Herriot, once more pretending that she was a bride, "but those gloves spoil the other for me. Say that they spoil it for you, too."

"They do."

"Good. Then this room will be ours. And the other can be yours in case I'm sick or anything, or for a guest, and the little one down in the end gable—oh, that shall be for the inevitable consequences."

It was excellent arrangement, Frank Manners said. And he imagined that if ever Fenn and Diana and Tam came to live in this house they would make precisely the same disposition of the available space. The gable room where Tam would sleep was at the end of quite a long corridor for so small a house. He entered it again, full of the thought that it would be his little daughter's. He walked to one of the windows and looked out. A ladder leaning against an outbuilding caught his eye, the eyes that could measure so accurately.

Then and there he had his first inkling of the plan that was later to be his obsession.

"If I learned that she wasn't happy with them," he thought, "I could come in the night and climb in at the window, and wrap her in a blanket and take her away."

"What are you looking at, Frank?"

"An old ladder. I was counting the rungs."

They went down-stairs again; but for Mrs. Herriot the game was not yet played out.

"Frank," she said, "it's still raining cats and dogs. It looks as if it might go on all afternoon and all night. Couldn't you bribe the caretaker to get supplies up from the village? . . . I'd so like to go on pretending till to-morrow."

But Frank Manners had no mind to spend another night in that house. The sight of Diana's gloves and the thought that Fenn might be unkind to Tam had disturbed his equilibrium.

"I have to be in town to-night," he said. "I am sorry."

But seeing how disappointed she looked he hastened to make amends.

"Look here. You nice little person," he said, "I have heavy alimony to pay and if I don't get busy I'll not be able to pay it. I know a house that I can get for a few months; the barn is a studio. It's in lovely autumn country. There are no neighbors. . . . How would you like that?"

"Oh—but, Frank," she said, "I'd *love* it."

"You'll pose for me, so I won't have to bother about models. I have the refusal of the grill in the new Cascapedia. I'll sign on for it. It's a whole big lot of money—nymphs and autumn foliage. Nymphs running and laughing and screaming and taking cover—and Pan hunting with a pack of fawns—hunting methodically and cruelly like bloodhounds. In the preliminary sketches you'll be all the nymphs. . . . Now that's a bargain, is it?"

"Of course it's a bargain."

"Well, then, smile and forgive me about not staying here to-night, and give me a kiss."

As they neared the city, she said something to him that was not easy for her to say.

"If you are going to put this big job over, Frank," she said, "hadn't you better climb on the wagon?"

"Yes," he said, "I must."

She slid her arm under his and pressed it gently.

"It'll be lots nicer, too," she said, "for me."

"Of course it will," he laughed. "Whiskey is nothing but egotism in a liquid form. I'll be good."

And a few days later, a thirsty but temporarily reformed Manners, having completed his arrangements, drove away with her in the racing car, and they settled down to an autumn of simple living, hard work and somewhat complicated love-making. As Mrs. Herriot wrote to her most intimate woman friend, Miss Violet LeNeuf, "Making love with a man who loves his work better than you and another lady better than his work is very complicated. . . ."

She corresponded most methodically with Miss LeNeuf, at this time, and certain passages from her letters are not without value in elaborating the character of the man with whom she was living.

" . . . Yes, my dear, *stark!* And on one foot till the s-w-e-a-t ran off me. Frank only casts a cold and calculating glance my way once in a while, but I come out fine in some of the sketches. He pulls me out long and scrunches me up till I look thicker. And he makes any number of pretty faces out of the simple little mug that God gave me. That's so when dozens of me go

gallivanting round the new grill that he's fixing, the *beaux monde* won't recognize little Herriot. I'm a herd of nymphs being chased by a pack of fawns and satyrs. Frank said that at first when I ran, I woggled and didn't look as if I was really trying to get away. So one day he catches up a garter-snake, and you should have seen little Herriot beat it, and you should have heard her yell. Frank laughed till I thought he'd die. You should see the sketch in which I take cover. It's the best yet. Frank made me run around the tennis court until I was ready to burst, and then he made me hide in a bunch of Virginia creeper. When the thing's done, you'll look and look and see nothing but the leaves at first; then you'll pipe a bright and terrified pair of lamps and then you'll see all me scrunched down flat and blowing like a porpoise. . . ."

"Thanks for the compliment. I *would* make a good wife, but I never will, not for this dear boy. I couldn't bore him into looking bored, or tease him into saying anything rude or cutting if I gave my life to it. I'd like him to beat me almost, and then make up for it. But he's the other way. He's so steadily kind and thoughtful and unselfish that it just can't be any trouble to him. So there's no virtue in it. The things that trouble him are so big that little things like burnt potatoes don't matter a bit. . . . Of course it's the trouble he had with his wife, and not having his little girl. I stopped long ago trying to worm the story out of him. But you don't live with a man as his wife without learning some of his thoughts. . . . If the way was paved with women like me he'd run over them

with spiked shoes to get to her. He wouldn't be cruel. He simply wouldn't know they were there. . . ."

"We had an awful fright, the pair of us (the usual thing), but nothing came of it, thank God, and we're working overtime while the weather lasts. I'm tough all over now, the way your face and hands just naturally are. Frank says I'm like some of the trees he's reading about in a book there is here. 'Hardy as far north as Mass., in sheltered positions.' It's a love of a country, and if I wasn't so damned unhappy that I could scream sometimes I'd be happy as a clam. . . . He subscribed to all the society papers. There was a picture of her with the little girl in the last 'Town and Country,' and some text to go with it. Lovely faces, just like pansies. I dare anybody to say that my Frank ever wronged anybody in his life; but no woman with a face like hers ever can have wronged anybody either. He wasn't looking for the picture, and I happened to be watching him when he came across it. He just opened the magazine quickly, came right on the picture, and froze, the way you've seen setters do in pictures when there's a bunch of quail on one side of a bush and they're on the other. I knew darn well what was the matter, but I said: 'Picture of someone you know?' and I went and looked over his shoulder. 'It's a picture of my wife and our little girl,' he said, 'and a very good picture.' After a while I said: 'Frank, why do you always say my wife instead of my former wife?'

"'Why do I?' says he, 'why, because she *is* my wife.' . . .

"He's drinking again; but not hard. I don't worry. He's been good for a long while. He says he's gone

stale on his work. We're resting, that means I wear clothes and we take long walks. I think he wants to break with me, and don't know how. The minute I'm sure of it I'll make it easy for him. Love him? Of course I do. But I've had every chance to make him love me, and he—he doesn't even get used to me. I don't make his life one mite easier, and maybe some one else would. I don't believe he'd have touched me or any other woman with a ten-foot pole except to furnish grounds' for that wife of his. Will you send me one half-dozen black silks, and charge same? Same old size, my feet haven't spread in spite of going barefoot. . . ."

One day, and most of the leaves had fallen by now, Frank Manners announced that he could do no more good in that place, and suggested that they return to the city.

"We've played at love in a cottage," he said, "and we know all about it. Would you like to keep it up forever?"

"No, dear," she said. "And why? Because I can't make you happy. Gawd knows I've tried, every way I could think of. It's easy to make most men happy for a time, but I've never made you happy for one single minute."

He slipped his arm around her shoulders and pressed her close to his side.

"If it's our last day," he said, "let's spend it on the lake. We'll paddle out to the middle, and just sit and let the wind take us; where we touch shore we'll eat lunch, and then I'll lie on my back and smoke, and you can tell me things."

They adhered to that plan, and a little sadly, since it was for the last time. When they had been wafted ashore and had had lunch, Frank Manners lay on his back and smoked with his head in Mrs. Herriot's lap. Presently he saw a V-shaped wedge of wild geese flying South, and he pointed them out to his mistress. When the geese were no longer visible he shivered a little as if he were cold, and got up.

"My dear child," he said, "you were complaining that you had not made me happy. You saw those geese?"

And forthwith, talking very quietly, he told her something of their habits; how they love but once. How sometimes the survivor of a mating mourns his mate for nearly a century. He told her how certain ganders have kept flying into the guns until they were at last killed, and how certain observers believe that such birds actually committed suicide.

"Once in a while," he said, "you find men who are geese enough to behave—like geese. If you haven't made me happy it's because I am one of those men. . . . The wild goose has lost his mate, my dear, and his life is all mourning."

She was profoundly touched. And they walked in silence to where they had left the canoe.

"You tried the impossible," he said, after he had paddled a little way. "With the utmost good nature, tact and charm, if I had been a stick or a stone you would have succeeded. But you were up against a wild goose."

Mail was waiting for them at the house, and among Mrs. Herriot's letters was one from Miss LeNeuf tell-

ing of a mutual friend's suicide. The man with whom the mutual friend had lived for some years had gone suddenly mad over a perfectly respectable girl of good family and married her at the end of a short engagement. Miss LeNeuf wrote: "Martha seemed to take the thing quietly enough. She said Vic had settled a lot of money on her and done the square thing all round. . . . The next day, my dear, they found her dead in her bathtub with her wrists almost severed. Lois, her colored maid, was the one to find her, and she ran right down to my flat and banged on the door till I got up and opened it. I got Headquarters on the 'phone and then I ran up-stairs. Only Martha's face showed and of course the water looked like pure blood. She looked like a white mask that someone had laid on a red sofa. . . . Where, I ask you, does anyone find the courage to use a razor?"

They were both very much shocked by the letter. Martha, it seemed, had posed more than once for Manners years ago. She had been an independent sort, with a good deal of natural dignity.

"I could no more cut myself," exclaimed Mrs. Herriot. "I'd rather sit till doomsday and listen to my heart breaking like ice in spring. How would you kill yourself if you got the bee in your bonnet?"

"Oh," said Manners, "I have it all nicely and comfortably arranged. I'd go to my house in the country when the weather is around zero. I'd put on the suit I was married in. When it gets to be almost bedtime, I swallow enough morphine to make me comatose. I open all the windows in the room where I used to sleep, I lie down on the bed without any covering on me, I

cross my right ankle over my left, I fold my hands on my breast, and nobody ever knows whether the morphine killed me or whether I froze to death."

"Where would you get the morphine?" she asked.

"I've got it," said he. "I've had it for years. Our cook had a toothache and our doctor came and gave her a hypodermic. Seems he left his main supply in her room. She brought me the bottle to return to him. I forgot all about it, and nobody reminded me. I came across it in the spring, quarter-grain tablets, full strength, plenty of 'em."

"You've never touched them, Frank?"

"Never," he said, "and I don't intend to. But morphine is like a revolver. If you ever do need it, you need it badly."

"What's a dose?" she asked.

"One quarter-grain is a good dose," he said. "A couple of grains might be dangerous."

She had asked the question idly, but the figures stuck in her mind.

CHAPTER XXI

When Diana found that being free no more meant being free than married had meant being bound, she began to see the world as it is more clearly than she had ever seen it before, and the spoiled child in her after a few violent protests and struggles curled up its wretched toes and died.

She had learned at last that freedom is not for those who do wrong, for she was no longer free to do right. Even if she wished she could never recover the precious things which she had thrown away. And in spite of her decree of absolute divorce, her life seemed still inextricably tangled up with her husband's. She was living on his money for one thing. When she had said that she would not take a cent from him she had meant that she would not. But she could not the moment the decree was granted stop living the way she had always lived, and start living in another way upon an income of absolutely nothing a year. She had supposed that her family would come to the rescue of her pride; but even Mrs. Langham took the attitude that a woman who had made such a perfect idiot of herself had no business to have any pride.

"The law has awarded you with alimony," said Mrs. Langham, "and you'll have to live on that. You could starve if you thought best, but Tam is used to comparative luxury. The law has given you custody

over Tam, after going deeply into the merits of your case, and you can't very well begin your custodianship by taking her to live in the park and feeding her on purloined berries and raw squirrels. You have this house for another year, I think, and money enough to run it. I don't see that you can do anything else for the present."

"Of course you'll stay with me."

"I shall do no such thing," said her mother tartly. "Do you think I would live on Frank's money after the way a member of my family has treated him?"

"You could pay your share, couldn't you?" Diana was almost pleading. Her mother was a great convenience. When you have a child, and at the same time like to be on the go a great deal, a mother who lives with you is tremendously useful. Diana had unpleasant visions of being more closely tied to domestic matters than she had ever been tied before.

"I sha'n't enjoy living here after what has happened," said Mrs. Langham. "I have a few thousands a year, and I think I shall go abroad."

"Surely, Mamma, you'll stay for my wedding! People would think——"

"I shall be on my way to the wedding," said Mrs. Langham, "but I am afraid that I shall be taken sick in Paris. And isn't it rather late to worry about what people will think? If I tell even my intimate friends that it's *all* Frank's fault, isn't that enough?"

So Diana and Tam were left to keep house in Westbury all by themselves, and the person they needed most was the person whom Diana had insisted on driving from the house. Diana was beginning to realize

what a weight of responsibility the average decent American husband staggers under. All that responsibility had been shifted to her own shoulders and she found it most trying to carry.

Still, if she was to be a very poor man's wife the training was excellent. She got out of the habit of rushing off to town at the slightest excuse. You simply couldn't leave a little child with no one more reliable than the average servant to look after it, and get the right doctor if it ate poison-ivy, or the best bone-setter if it fell down and broke its neck.

Free? She was tied hand and foot! At least when she was Frank's wife she had come and gone as she pleased. She had been able to see her lover day after day. Her respectability was above suspicion. But now that Frank no longer sheltered her, and her mother had packed up her things and gone abroad it was as difficult for her to see him as if she had been a nun in a convent.

But of course she could write to him and receive his letters. And she did write to him often, and he came back at her with from one to three letters a day; but for them both it was growing more and more difficult to throw any new and original illuminations upon the wonderful and eternal love which they had for each other.

From Frank Manners she received no letters. And her curiosity as to what had become of him, and her anxiety for him became acute. It is true that Tam often had letters from her father. But they revealed nothing whatever of the man save his love for his child. They were beautifully printed, as a rule, so that

Tam could read them for herself, and, as a rule, they were extra illustrated, in pen and ink, in wash, or sometimes in color. Love they revealed, and imagination. But even Diana, who knew him best, could not say if the man who made those letters was gay or sad, working or idling, sick or well. The postmarks told her that after leaving New York he had gone to a place with an Indian name somewhere in Massachusetts, but not even Peter Manners, of whom she made inquiries, could or would tell her anything about it.

Sometimes, when she was feeling particularly low and blue she wondered if he ever saw anything of that awful Mrs. Herriot.

Harassed and miserable in the present, and dreadfully troubled about the future, Diana showed a gameness which would have impressed all who knew her if they had known that it was gameness. But her friends thought that she was living quietly in the country with Tam because she wanted to. Restless almost to madness at times she showed an outward patience and cheerfulness that must have caused the Recording Angel to look up the record that he had kept of her since the day she was born and wonder if he ought not to erase the N. G. which he had pencilled in the margin on hearing of her divorce and substitute a question mark.

If she had not found outlets for her energy, Diana might well have perished. Fortunately there were many things in which she had never taken, and did not yet take, the slightest interest that simply had to be done. There were such things that Frank, or in his absence Mrs. Langham, had always attended to. In

the old days Diana, if she happened to be the one to discover that "that place in the roof" was leaky again, had felt a glow of cleverness and efficiency. Now, however, she not only had to learn of the leak but to interview the carpenter, an interminable person. Grounds have to be kept in order; hedges trimmed, lawns cut. The gardener, no longer directed or praised, took less trouble with the garden. It was no longer full of flowers. Now gardens have to be full of flowers, and so Diana's garden, that had been Frank's, had to be filled.

A governess, any stranger in the house, would have been intolerable at this time, and one morning Diana decided very positively, but with painful misgivings, that Tam must have lessons, and that she herself must administer them to her.

Very gradually Diana began to take an interest and a pride in the hundred and one domestic items that had come down upon her. And toward the end of the season the grounds and the garden had made a real place for themselves in her life. She often thought about them when she didn't have to. If this was a blessing there was a curse mixed up with it. For whenever her natural good taste began involuntarily to consider certain radical changes that ought to be made if the place was to fulfill its possibilities, she ran against the solid rock that to effect these changes would either take more money than she could afford, or several seasons of vegetable growth. She could not give them even one more season. By the time the lilacs bloomed again she would be Mrs. Ogden Fenn, and she would not be the mistress of these grounds or that

garden any more. It would be years and years before they could even have a little place of their own anywhere and that, as Diana sometimes reflected, was tough luck just when she was getting to like the country and to learn something about it.

That Ogden Fenn would ever consent to be benefited in the slightest degree by the alimony which Diana received from her husband was unthinkable. And therefore unless his affairs prospered very much more than they were at the moment prospering they would be poor people. Only Tam should benefit by the alimony, after the wedding, and what sums remained over after paying for her needs should be put in the savings bank for her. Ogden himself had suggested that arrangement.

Late in February Diana moved to town. In one of his letters to Tam, Manners had written, "Tell Mumsey that I sha'n't want the apartment any more, and that in case she does, the rent has been paid till the first of June." And upon reading that, Tam had asked a child's question:

"And when you move into the apartment will Fahzer move out here?"

Why two such charming gods as her father and mother did not live together any longer was a great puzzle to Tam. She had been told that she should see her father very often, but she had seen him very seldom and she loved him very much.

That beloved father was working very hard on the murals for the big grill room. He had taken a studio apartment in a free and easy part of the city and his former haunts knew him no more. He had broken

with Mrs. Herriot, and she had made the break easy for him. "I tried my best to make him happy," she confided to Miss LeNeuf, "and somehow I feel as if I had only succeeded in degrading him. It's best as it is. I'd do anything in the world for him, and he'd do a whole lot for me."

"Exit Frank Manners," said Miss LeNeuf; "enter——?"

"Delancey Stairs," said Mrs. Herriot in a business-like voice; "once he's lord and master he'll be a jealous proposition, but I like lots of things about him. He's open-handed for one thing and simply *rolling*. You may not believe it, my dear, but I am *not* as young as I used to be, and I have sworn a solemn oath that the nest in which I finally wrinkle and shrink to death shall be well feathered."

As they drove away to the station, Diana, who was very thickly veiled, did not look back at the house. She held one of Tam's hands very lightly in both hers. This did not prevent Tam from looking back.

"When Fahzer moves out," she said, "he will look after my chickens."

Diana made no comment. Her beautiful brows tightly knitted behind the thick veil, she was exercising every ounce of control which she possessed. She felt like a criminal going to execution. In the train this thought occurred to her:

"Why *must* I marry him? Why couldn't I make a good life just for Tam and me? We could look forward to Westbury in the Spring. I could tinker with the place. I'm getting to like tinkering. . . . Oh, I must marry him. I love him, and I have promised,

and so help me God I will not spare myself in any way to make him happy. The poor lad, he has only me!"

And she did love him, but already she knew that she could not always love him, that that beautiful and eternal love upon the certainty of which she had dared to make so much unhappiness for others, was a will-o'-the-wisp.

The love that she had for him had developed certain practical and matter-of-fact sides. She remembered that she had had the same symptoms in that much longer period during which she had slowly fallen out of love with her husband.

Fenn had sent many roses to her apartment; far more than he could afford. There was a love-letter with them. She was very much touched. His appeal was not so much to the spoiled and passionate schoolgirl now, as to the indulgent mother.

When Tam had had supper and been put to bed early, Diana locked herself in her room and broke down.

CHAPTER XXII

A BRISK and smart maid, almost white, brought Mrs. Herriot the morning papers, and withdrew discreetly.

Mrs. Herriot's bedroom was really very charming, though a trifle overdressed. There was too much muslin, and the muslin was too much flounced. But the blues of the room were delicious blues, the gilt toilette articles by Keller had a strength of design and delicacy of execution that were almost Greek, and the May sunlight poured in through a whole broadside of windows.

There were too many mirrors in the room, but Mrs. Herriot, who could see herself at the moment in most of them, would have looked charming in them all. She had been out of bed to do her hair, and she was back in bed, sitting up against the most snowy and delectable pillows. She had on a blue silk dressing jacket, and a lace cap. The mere fact that a man could be heard singing loudly under a shower-bath not two rooms away, did not detract from the essential modesty and discretion of her appearance.

Her face had a happy look. She had done well to advance Delancey Stairs to the position of favorite. He had spent buckets of money on her, and she had so impressed him with her essential sweetness and honesty, that he had spoken more than once of "salting away" enough money in trust for her to keep her from

future financial worries. He had not only spoken of this, but had said definitely that he was going to do it when he "got around to it."

She skimmed through the paper, without being arrested by any particular item, until she came to the paragraph in which it was briefly announced that at noon that day Mrs. Diana Langham Manners would become Mrs. Ogden Fenn.

It was not at first any thought of Frank Manners's tragic feelings which caused Mrs. Herriot's eyebrows to shoot upward, and her lower lip to disappear beneath her upper teeth. It was the name Ogden Fenn.

But her second thought was for Manners, all for Manners. A phrase jumped into her brain and repeated itself.

"This will hit my wild goose where he lives. . . . This will hit my wild goose where he lives."

She beat with her little fist upon her knee. Then she glanced toward the door of the bathroom. Stairs had not taken the trouble to push it all the way to. That was why the singing, which had ceased now, had sounded so loud.

She reached for the telephone which stood near the head of her bed, and her eye on the bathroom door began to speak into the mouthpiece. But she did not take the receiver from the hook.

"Ludlow 2507 . . . Is this Mrs. Boster's house? . . . What? . . . And she's all alone? . . . Her brother couldn't come? . . . Why, Bridget, how terrible! . . . This is Mrs. Herriot speaking. . . . I will come just as soon as I am dressed . . . very low? Anha . . . Who's her doctor? . . . Anha . . . O course! . . . You

say she's been asking for me? . . . You tell her that I'll come, and that I'll stay as long as she needs me."

Her eyes, very bright with invention, Mrs. Herriot put back the telephone. Then she called to Stairs.

"Oh, Delancey . . . Can you speak with me a moment?"

Mr. Stairs had nearly completed his toilette. He was eminently presentable; a tall, thick man, with a handsome and clever face above a somewhat heavy and sullen jaw. He was younger than Mrs. Herriot, but he had the look of a much older man.

"To hear," he said slowly, "is to obey."

"My great friend, Mrs. Boster," she began glibly, "has been taken suddenly ill . . ."

"Did you think," he interrupted firmly but with his usual placid deliberation, "that you would run less risk of catching her disease if you left the receiver on the hook?"

"You looked through the door."

"Through the aperture between the door and the door frame. I saw the whole performance. It was A1. If I had not looked I should have been most grossly deceived. . . . Why did you do it?"

"Oh, it seemed the easiest way, I suppose. Shall I tell you the truth?"

"You shall."

This was ominous, but she managed to look unconcerned.

"I want to get out of dining, and a roof to-night. I want to be free to-night."

"Why, Elaine?"

"Because a friend that I love is in terrible trouble."

"A woman."

"No."

"What man?"

"Delancey, dear, if I tell you the whole truth, you'll not . . ."

"Gossip? It would be so like me."

"The man is Frank Manners. His wife that was is going to be married to-day, and Frank loves her so I'm afraid he may kill himself. I want to be with him. I know I can help him, and make him feel not so badly about it."

"You will do exactly as you please."

"Delancey, we are *nothing* to each other."

"You lived together. *You* were the unnamed co-respondent."

"He *hated* it. Every bit of it."

"Look at yourself in these various mirrors, my dear Elaine, and tell me that again."

"Delancey, please be generous. I swear to you there's nothing more *possible* between him and me."

"You love him?"

She thought for a moment. Then she said:

"I don't know. I wanted to live with him always. But living with me made him feel mean and degraded, so I engineered a break that was easy for him. So . . . I guess I do love him."

"You love him. How do you propose to comfort him?"

"I don't *know* that I can. But I know something that might comfort him—oh, a mouse of a thing, but it *might* be a lion. If I can't help him through this, nobody can."

Delancey Stairs came and sat on the edge of the bed.

"Elaine," he said. "You will do as you please, of course. What you please, however, seems to settle down to a choice between two men. I intended to do something rather handsome for you. Don't forget that in your calculations."

"There are no calculations in this, Delancey. The man I love is facing hell, and I've got to see him through."

"Even if it costs you ten thousand a year."

She looked at him steadily.

"Yes, Delancey. Even if it costs me ten million a year. I *think* I can help him and I've got to try."

After that neither of them spoke for some time. Mrs. Herriot broke the silence.

"You've no *cause* to feel jealous."

"But I do," he said. "And it's hell. I'm crazy mad about you. Don't you know that? You could do anything *with* me. But you can't do things *to* me. Not you nor any other woman."

He walked slowly back into the bathroom, and emerged in a moment, slowly removing his coat from a stretcher, put on the coat, surveyed himself for a moment in a mirror, and then turned to Mrs. Herriot.

"Are you dining with me to-night or not?"

The tears began to run down her cheeks.

"Please be generous," she said. "I'll come if I *can*. But if I find him, and he needs me—don't you see I just *couldn't* come?"

"If you are not there at eight sharp," he said, "I'm through with you."

He turned and without another word walked solidly and definitely out of the room.

It is perhaps curious to think that during the night he had said the silliest things to her in a sort of baby talk.

Mrs. Herriot dressed and drove at once to Frank Manners's studio. Failing to find the right silver in her purse she stuffed a five dollar bill into the driver's hand, and when she saw the look of astonishment that came into his face at her refusal to wait for the change, she smiled and thought: "It's all relative. Five dollars seems big to him for a short ride. What would he think if he knew that it was costing me ten thousand a year?"

She entered the studio building carrying her brave little head high. And she almost collided with Peter Manners.

"Why, hello!—" he exclaimed.

"Oh, Mr. Manners, you've been with Frank. How *is* he?"

"He didn't want me," said Mr. Manners. "Poor fellow. He kicked me out."

Mr. Manners was wearing a high hat and a frock coat.

"Are you going to the wedding?" she asked.

"Yes, and if I don't hurry . . ."

She rang Frank Manners's door bell, and waited five minutes. Then she rang it again. She kept ringing it at intervals for nearly three hours. She knew that he wasn't dead; because from time to time she could hear the sound of his well-known footsteps. Every now and then she rested a little while, sitting

on the top step of the flights which wound around the elevator shaft.

All of a sudden and just as she was going to push the bell again the door was violently opened. But the anger in Frank Manners's pale face swiftly faded.

She looked tired out. And the tears were streaming down her cheeks.

"Why, you poor little thing," he said. "You poor little thing."

She snuffled once or twice, and wiped the tears from her face.

"I—I came to tell you something—f-funny," she said. "I know you'd be feeling terrible—and I thought if I could make you laugh . . ."

He made her sit down and he brought her a glass of water.

"Drink that," he said. "And then for God's sake make me laugh."

"You see," she said presently, "I know you feel too terrible, and I thought that maybe you could stand it better if you knew that Og—Ogden Fenn is *awfully* knock-kneed—just like a woman, and—and snores."

He did laugh; but a harsh ugly laugh in the top of his head. It was own cousin to hysterics. She watched him in an agony of pity and fear. But her mind worked and she considered what she should do next to relieve the tension which threatened to snap his nervous system to pieces. She was a wise little person in her way and she made no effort to place his tragedy in a more favorable light. She did not for instance tell him that she knew just how he felt, or that he wouldn't mind so much later on. On the

contrary she told him that no fluffy frivolous little person like herself could possibly know how terribly he felt. And when he said: "Oh, he guessed he'd live through it," she said very simply, "I hope to God you do, Frank, but you don't look as if you stood a ghost of a chance."

She had managed to pull her own nerves together and she tried to make her voice sound very matter of fact and practical. His rooms were in disorder, and when she had taken off her hat and gloves she started to put them to rights.

"Have you been drinking a lot, Frank?" she asked.

"The last few days. I don't suppose it's done any good; but I don't dare stop."

He flopped down in a deep chair and buried his face in his hands. But he apologized as best he could.

"I'm all right," he said, "only I can't control my nerves."

She paused a moment from her work of restoring order, and stood looking at him. He spoke again, and there was a distinct wailing note in his voice.

"I don't see how I am to get through tonight," he said. "I don't see that."

The hands dropped from his face. He turned and looked at her, his eyes full of horror.

"Do you know what it is to have an imagination?" he asked. He leaped then suddenly to his feet, and pounding his left fist with his right. "It will be as if I was in the same room with them," he cried, "tied hand and foot. And all the lights lighted . . . Oh, I wish I had gone to the church and shot him as they came out, and shot him and shot him and shot him . . ."

She glanced at the clock over the mantelpiece.

"You couldn't get there in time now, Frank," she said. "But don't think about that part. He'll get what's coming to him. He can no more hold a woman's love than he can keep his mouth shut when he's asleep. Adenoids, likely."

"How do you know so much about him, Elaine?" he asked with a lugubrious show of interest.

"Don't ask fool questions, Frank," she answered. "Remember the life I've lived, and then have the politeness to forget it. Will you do me a heap big favor?"

"I'll try, my dear."

"Will you lie on that big leather sofa, and shut your eyes and not move or talk till I get the rest of the place tidied up?"

He considered this proposal for a moment. Then he said "Ye-es, but I want a drink first."

"I'll bring you the drink myself," she said, "if you'll do me my favor first."

He began to frown a little at being crossed, then laughed mirthlessly and went and lay down on the sofa.

"Stretch your arms and legs," she said, "just as hard as you can stretch them; and hold them stretched till they ache. *Then* let go. If you really want to relax *that's* the way to do it . . . And shut your eyes."

Mrs. Herriot did not confine herself entirely to putting the rest of the apartment to rights. As a matter of fact she went straight to the little table at the head of Frank Manners's bed and pulled open the drawer at the top. This contained three one cent pieces, an

automatic pistol, a broken rubber band, and the little bottle of quarter grain morphine tablets of which he had once told her. She drew a long shuddering breath of relief. The morphine was snugly sandwiched between two layers of absorbent cotton. She pulled the cork from the bottle, picked out the upper layer of cotton with a hairpin, and shook a dozen of the tablets into the palm of her hand.

All but one of these she hid in an accessible place and then she went to the dining-room to mix the drink that she had promised to bring him.

That first drink of Mrs. Herriot's mixing did not affect him much; but the second did. He became much calmer. He noticed this himself. He imagined, he said, that pain could only reach a certain point of intensity, that when that point was reached the nerves that received the impression of pain simply struck. . . . "And," he added with sleepy gallantry, "you've had a lot to do with making things easier to bear. Come and sit down on the edge of this sofa, and tell me what I can do to show that I am grateful."

"If you'd go to sleep, and stay asleep, God knows I'd feel fully thanked, Frank, dear. Couldn't you?"

He shook his head, or rather he rolled it slowly from side to side.

"Elaine," he said, "I don't seem to care much at all now. . . . And so that dashing lover, the home wrecker has badly knocked knees?"

Mrs. Herriot nodded. And smoothed back the stray hair from his forehead. It was more than half gray now.

"Frank," she said, "she had no real good reason to do what she did, had she?"

"No basic reason, Elaine. I had a chance to keep her love and make her happy and somehow I couldn't use it."

"You don't feel a bit bitter against her any more, do you?"

"Not any more. Just loving and sorry."

"Well, I feel bitter against her, I can tell you."

"YOU? Why?"

His drowsy eyes became quite round with wonder.

"Oh," she snapped. "For being such a damned fool. She ought to be punished."

And then and there Mrs. Herriot made up her mind to punish the woman who had so wounded her poor Wild Goose.

"Frank," she said, "I'm the last person in the world to recommend strong drink. But that last one seems to have done you a world of good. How about one little touch more?"

She did not wait for his answer but drifted off smiling with a long empty glass in her hand. Soon after that third drink he fell calmly asleep. It was dark when he partially waked. He said he was very thirsty, "water thirsty," his mouth was dry as plaster. If it wasn't for that he thought he could go to sleep again.

Mrs. Herriot smiled triumphantly in the dark.

"Suppose you go and get into bed," she said, "that's the place to sleep, and I'll bring you a long glass of good Croton with lots of ice in it."

She turned on the lights, and watched him shamble

sleepily off to his bedroom. When she thought that he had had sufficient time to undress she carried the tall glass of ice water to his door and knocked.

He was lying on his bed fully dressed. He could hardly lift his eyelids. After a few swallows of water he fell sound asleep.

The drug seemed to have erased many of the lines from his face which suffering had put there. His breathing was easy and natural; he had the expression of one who has been pleasantly and innocently amused.

The hands of a traveling clock on the dressing-table pointed to eight.

"There goes my ten thousand a year for keeps," said Mrs. Herriot. She drew one long sighing breath, and forthwith dismissed all her own private trouble from her head, and with the most gratified and tender solicitude took Frank Manners's feet in her lap and began to unlace his shoes. Somehow or other, for he was a big man and she was little and not very strong, she got him into a fresh suit of pajamas and into his bed. Then she opened as many windows as there were, and put out the lights. But she left the door ajar so that she could go in and out without disturbing him.

She found some note paper in a drawer of the writing-table, and she sat for a long time with an occasionally reinked pen poised over it and ready to write. Finally she made a beginning and pausing only when more ink was needed she wrote the following note, sealed it in an envelope and addressed it to Mrs.

Ogden Fenn, Westbury, with the remark, "A note like that is sure to find her."

My Dear Mrs. Ogden Fenn:

I am the woman who helped to furnish you with the grounds upon which you indignantly and righteously divorced your husband. I am writing to you for several reasons: (1) To ask if you know the difference between a salmon and a carp? Between an eagle and a puddle-duck?—and to tell you that if you don't know the difference, I do. (2) To say that you needn't have taken the trouble to find out for yourself as I could have told you if you had asked me, that the puddle-duck has knock knees and adenoids. When he is sleeping, and you are trying to, the latter are distinctly audible. (3) To inform you that hell is full of women like you, and that I hope from the bottom of my heart that you suffer all the unhappiness you deserve in this world and the next.

Elaine Herriot.

When the bell rang and Mrs. Herriot opened the door she expected to see Peter Manners. It was not Mr. Manners, however, whom, to her fear and astonishment, she found herself facing, but Delancey Stairs. She had for a moment the ridiculous belief that he had turned Sicilian and had come to murder her. Her heart beat like that of a wild bird that has been caught in the hand. But his slow deliberate utterance and the fact that his expression though grave and troubled was not stern, brought the color back to her face.

"I couldn't rest," he said, "until I had seen you again. Could you come on the landing a minute and talk with me?"

"You'd better come in. And I'm glad that you have come. It's lonely work now. Frank has gone to bed and to sleep, thank God."

He followed her into the big studio.

"If I have done you an injustice," he said, "I want to know it."

"You have," she said, "but it's all right. I don't blame you. I'm so *glad* you came."

"I had to fight myself hard. I am jealous as hell by nature, and I jump at conclusions."

"Take your coat off, and sit in that brown chair. It's ugly, but very comfy."

"To hear is to obey," he said, and when he had sat down, she told him something of her experiences in giving first aid to Frank Manners.

"Three hours!" she repeated, "I kept ringing that darned bell for three hours. And when he did open the door he looked murder. But when he saw it was only me, he seemed sort of dazed and somehow or other let me in. I could see at once that he'd been drinking hard—not drunk, the next stage—saturated —preserved. And God, what a face—the color of oak before it's oiled, a whity gray, and his eyelids twitching and jumping. . . Just the same I made him laugh, almost turned into hysterics though. . . . Well it was evident that he'd locked himself up here. and that nobody had been allowed in to tidy up. His bed hadn't been made, his clothes hadn't been hung up, his shaving brush was still full of lather, the bath

towels hadn't been picked up. He'd cooked himself some bacon and eggs, early this morning probably, and he'd dropped one raw egg in front of the stove. I promised him a drink if he'd lie down till I'd finished tidying up. He consented to that, and then of course I beat it for the morphine."

"The *what?*"

"He never touched morphine in his life, but I knew he had some, and it's the kind of thing you'd keep near you if you happened to have it, and were in trouble. Well, I thought I might have to hunt high and low, but I took a chance on the drawer of the table by his bed, and there it was—luck!"

"How much did you give him?"

"A quarter of a grain at first. Three quarters altogether. And now he doesn't know that there's any trouble in the world."

"He'll know to-morrow . . . I think I'd better look at him. Three-quarters of a grain might hurt some men."

When they returned from Manners's bedroom Stairs had the bottle of morphine in his hand.

"I shall take the liberty," he said, "of having something harmless substituted for these things. A man in his state ought not to have morphine lying around loose. If he ever finds out what made him feel sleepy and serene, he'll want more. And if he finds out to-morrow when he wakes up and feels the way he is going to feel, he'll want a lot more."

"Will he be very sick?"

"A big dose of morphine on top of two or three days' hard drinking ought to make him so sick that

he won't care how many wives divorce him. . . . I sha'n't be long. And by the way, are you going to spend the night here?"

"I intended to; but it doesn't seem as if there was anything more that I could do."

"Feel like a little spree!"

"If you say so."

He leaned suddenly toward her, and patted her shoulder.

"You'll be happier staying right here," he said. "Won't you?"

"Yes," she said, and with a magnanimous impulse. "I never liked you as much as I do this very minute. You are big and generous."

"If that's so," said he, "I am very thankful that I did some hard thinking after I left you this morning. I'll get this stuff changed and come back and sit with you a while. You're a good girl, and I'm crazy about you."

CHAPTER XXIII

DIANA'S determination to suffer all things in her new life without flinching was tested before she had been Mrs. Ogden Fenn an hour. Matrimony worked immediate wonders in the shy and self-effacing Mr. Fenn. The poor fellow felt doubtless that being now the head of a family he must show himself self-reliant and develop initiative. Or it may be that he was not without that palæolithic instinct of the conquering male to show off. To be brief Diana found that the hero, the divine lover, to whom she was now irrevocably married, was a little mite pompous. He made it a little too obvious to persons who could not have been in the least concerned that he was her husband.

In due time Diana received the letter which Elaine Herriot had written her. And it had upon her the effect which Mrs. Herriot had intended that it should have. For though Diana destroyed the substance of the letter by fire its spirit she could not destroy. She never mentioned either the letter or Mrs. Herriot to her husband. But they both gnawed at her pride and her heart.

It has been said that Diana had a good eye for fitness and for proportion and that she was, when in her right mind, exceedingly fastidious. The fact therefore that her new husband's legs were very badly

knock-kneed actually helped to undermine the love and admiration that she had for him; that and the pompousness which he had developed—a trick of clearing the throat before saying important things—a condescension in his manner toward servants, instead of that perfect simplicity and naturalness which marks those who are really well-bred.

It developed also that he was very jealous of her old friends, especially the men. It gave him no pleasure to learn that she had had lunch with Peter Manners, or had met Montgomery Stairs just outside of Altman's and walked a few blocks with him. And of course, all that was very natural. When a man wins another man's wife he wins a woman, who, no matter whose wife she is, can be won. Diana having been false to one set of marriage vows was not to be trusted quite so implicitly in a new set as a woman of similar beauty, breeding and temperament who was trying them for the first time. By telling her a little too often how completely he trusted her, Mr. Fenn proved to his sensitive bride that his trust in her was as much policy as instinct.

The poor fellow was desperately in love, desperately anxious to please, and desperately anxious to increase his income so that there should be no great descent for her in the scale of living. From the beginning things went badly for him. He did not please her as a husband nearly as much as he had pleased her as a lover. And he suspected this to be the case without being sure of it. He could not but feel that at times she was making unfavorable comparisons in the back of her head. That he should only have suspected these

things is to praise Diana's nerve and power to keep good resolutions to the sky. For almost she would have killed herself sooner than let the world or Fenn perceive that the mad, foolish, selfish thing she had done was a failure from the start. Fenn might well have trusted her utterly. She had learned her lesson. She would never again indulge in one of those harmless flirtations, or any other kind of a flirtation. She was a married woman in all the best meanings of that expression. But in her heart she soon wished that she had not been so long in mastering her lesson. It would have been so much easier, and so much more distinguished to have been a good wife to Frank Manners.

The first thing to make itself felt as a definite issue between Diana and Fenn was money; and the next thing was Tam. It was during the first winter of their marriage that Fenn, who was quite desperately hard up, hinted that some of the handsome alimony which Diana received from Frank Manners should be used for the common good. But Diana proved deaf to the suggestion.

"I insisted," she said, "that I wouldn't use one penny of his money for anyone's benefit but Tam's. And I won't. I'll starve first. As it is I sometimes think that her savings bank account is smaller than it ought to be and her contribution to our joint expenses larger. You were sure that there would be no difficulty about money. There mustn't be. I'll take some more thin parings off the cost of living, but that is all that I can do. We are nearly at the core as it is. Don't think that I mind. I don't. We always said

that love was the only thing that mattered. I'm game to make that good if you are."

Of course he was. And the conversation dissolved into warm embraces and protestations of eternal love.

Somewhere deep down in Ogden Fenn there was engendered, however, a feeling of resentment against Tam. She paid her way and she had money in the bank. He had nothing that he could call his own in the bank and was running a little into debt. Furthermore although the child seemed to like him well enough he could not win her confidence. She had inherited reserve from her mother and the power not to speak what was in her mind. She wasn't happy. Very pleasant ways of life had been changed for ways that were not nearly so pleasant. It would not be fair to say that she was unhappy. As she grew older, he thought, she would make an idol of her father and judge the man who had separated her from him very sharply. Already she knew that in some vague way he had been grossly outraged and wronged.

The little apartment which they inhabited was smart and attractive, as was everything that Diana touched. It was as much like a home as an arrangement of hat boxes can be. And it was never just the right temperature.

Soon after Christmas the Fenn's began to worry about the summer. Diana would have preferred to remain in the city; but for Tam that was out of the question. It was decided finally that Diana and Tam should inhabit the little house at Combers and that Fenn should come to them for the week ends and for two solid weeks in August. To facilitate the some-

what difficult commuting and marketing he decided to buy a second hand jitney. He felt that he had a bent for mechanics and that he was just the kind of man who by a little weekly tinkering could keep a motor in good running order.

It was already hot when Diana and her little daughter left the city for good. They had made several previous trips to Combers in the jitney, fatiguing all day affairs, to put the house to rights and to get their luggage moved without troubling the railroads about anything but the big trunks, and during these trips had become closer and dearer to each other than they had ever been before.

In almost every way Combers was a change for the better; the surrounding mountain scapes seized, filled and satisfied the eye. Unless the atmosphere itself chose to be articulate the nights were as still as they were cool and fresh.

Of course there wasn't much to *do,* and there were no neighbors of the kind to which Diana had been accustomed; but since she was gregarious she soon began to make acquaintances among the villagers, and in some instances to lay the foundations of real friendships. Some of the older women who had known great troubles and weathered them were especially delightful, and wise. And it occurred to Diana for the first time in her life that the higher virtues, loyalty, steadfastness, willingness to bear children, and cheerfulness are not only their own reward, but the greatest reward to be had in the world.

The more familiar she became with the history of this woman or that, the less pleasant she found it to

appear before the tribunal of her own conscience. There were women in Combers who through thick and thin had stuck to the worst kind of husbands, and had done right so thoroughly, patiently and unflinchingly as in the end to shame their worse halves into decent human conduct.

Diana's history became more or less known, and the women of Combers took it for granted that since she had divorced her husband the wretchedness and cruelty that she had had to put up with must have been far worse than anything ever openly known in that neighborhood, and among themselves surrounded her beautiful head with a halo of martyrdom.

"When I think what that poor woman must have gone through!" sighed Mrs. Van Buren, who be it said had borne her husband nine children, and more than once during her pregnancies had been knocked down and beaten.

Beatings and knockings down she took for granted in Diana's case, and her imagination strove to conceive of these infinitely worse things which had driven the lovely matron into the divorce court. Horrible, unspeakable things, they must have been. The kind of things that most people don't even know anything about.

Diana felt the sympathy, for it was hinted rather than spoken, and at times she longed to make a clean breast of her real claims to sympathy and stop sailing under false colors.

"What *would* they think of me," she wondered, "if I told them that I divorced my husband for no better reason than that I thought I wanted a different

one, and that, God help me, I didn't really want the different one nearly as much as I thought I did, and had every reason to be contented and happy with the other."

For Tam and Diana the jitney worked overtime. The little girl's legs were not yet long enough to reach the foot pedals, but she learned to steer the car and to work the throttle. They explored the surrounding country most thoroughly, and as friendships developed often carried two or three village children and a picnic lunch in the back seat.

The house being badly in need of a garden, Diana hired a man to clear a favorable patch of ground of rocks and brush so that it could be spaded, levelled, and put into flowers and vegetables another year. She would have liked to do all this work herself, a little at a time, and ordinarily she would have had the necessary strength and energy. But at this time Diana who was beginning to look thin in the face, and thick through the waist, spent most of her spare time in sewing.

CHAPTER XXIV

FRANK MANNER'S grief, passion, jealousy, despair and dissipation soon wore themselves out. And for a long while he was not nearly as unhappy as he had expected to be. That was because through too much suffering he had temporarily lost his capacity to feel pain. It was as if his more delicate sensibilities had been treated with an ether spray and frozen. It seemed to him that he was no longer in love with his wife, that Tam was not indispensable to him, and that he had made a terrific fool of himself for nothing.

Gradually he got the idea that everybody thought that he had made a fool of himself and therefore despised him, and it became natural to him to avoid most of his old friends and to make no new ones.

During all the periods of despair and general wretchedness his art curiously enough had made great strides. An extraordinary successful portrait of Mrs. Hastings electrified the critics, who had thought of him as a landscape man, and decorator, and the public as well. It brought him a deluge of orders from rich women who wished to be painted by the same man who had painted the famous Mrs. Hastings. Since his own definite ambition was to provide well for his little daughter's present and future he accepted all the orders which he thought he could fill, and throughout the winter worked with

great patience, energy and success. And he earned twice the money that he had ever earned before in the same length of time. His portraits became the rage.

At times he almost thought that he was contented. As a matter of fact he was only numb. When the numbness had worn off he would find that the crack in his heart was not healed, but wider and deeper, and that his life was emptier than a glass from which the rich wine had been poured.

He had never done much theorizing; either about art, literature, politics or the sexes. But he began at this time to perplex himself very much about the relationships of the sexes, and to simplify for his own enlightenment the very complex laws upon which these relationships are based. From this thinking always of his own troubles with Diana and of other cases with which he had, or was becoming familiar, he began to generalize. Soon Diana was no longer in his eyes a beloved individual who had done so and so, but the "kind of woman" who does so and so. Fenn was no longer an individual who had broken up his home, but the "kind of man" who breaks up other men's homes.

From his sitters, women for the most part with plenty of leisure for the introspection that leads to rash experimentation he acquired much food for thought.

Most of these women married or otherwise wanted their relations with him to be *different* from the *usual* relations between customer and producer. One of the most prevalent (and one of the highest) ideals entertained by attractive young women is the ideal

of platonic friendship. Few of them he discovered had so high an ideal of the marital relation. One way in which women waken their passions is in the pursuit of a relationship from which the passions are excluded.

There was a Mrs. Tennant who talked so much of platonic friendships, and insisted so hard that *he* was *different* from other men, that *she* was different from other women, etc., that Manners actually accepted her advances, and for some time actually believed that the ideal relationship she so admired was possible of achievement. He was of course led into this friendship, not by any aptitude that Mrs. Tennant had for friendship but by her extreme charm and prettiness, and her superficial friendliness. He felt very natural and at ease whenever she was in the studio; it was a pleasure to paint her. She asked his advice about many things, and took it.

One night about eleven o'clock she came to the studio, and told him that platonic friendships were against reason and nature, that she loved him, and that like it or not she had left her husband forever.

There was never in this world a more horrified or disillusionized man than Frank Manners. And he told her so.

"Oh, my dear child," he said. "Almost you might be my daughter, and you have three children of your own, and by your own account a perfectly satisfactory husband who loves and provides. It wasn't your beauty or your charm or your wit that has so attracted me to you, my mind to yours—it was your good old-fashioned common sense."

"But I knew that the other things wouldn't attract you," she wailed, "so I tried the common sense. And there is no such thing as platonic friendship. I felt sorry for you, because I knew you were unhappy. And I thought it would be good for you to be attracted to me, even very much. And you wouldn't be and I was to you more and more, and I hate my husband, and if you don't stand by me, I'll kill myself. I'll throw myself out of that window."

Manners smiled very cheerfully, walked quickly to the window and opened it.

"If you really hate your husband, and really want to leave him and your children, and come to live with me instead," he said, "it's the very best thing you could do. As for standing by you in any campaign to break up a good home which an excellent man has provided for you—I'll do no such thing."

She made two or three desperate steps toward the window. If she had made two more Manners must have sprung forward to save her. But she couldn't help taking a hurried look at him, and she found that he had turned his back and was reaching his hand for a box of cigarettes.

She sat down then in a chair and cried very bitterly.

"I hate you," she said.

"You hate the discovery that what you thought to be one of the great eternal passions of history is nothing of the sort."

"Men are brutes."

"For millions of years men have made the mistake of sympathizing with women when they are in the wrong. You love your children. Nothing that they

can ever say or do can alter that. It's the one thing you can be sure of. Once you thought you were going to love your husband forever. A moment ago you thought you were going to love me forever. Already you hate me . . ."

She rose and moved toward the door.

"Most men," she said, "would have at least had the courtesy—"

But he interrupted her.

"Many men," he said, "would have done for beauty and charm the compliment of letting you ruin yourself. I believe that timidity, embarrassment, and lack of savoir-faire are largely responsible for the evil reputation that gets attached to some men. I believe the story of the apple and Eve and the serpent, and of Poor Adam, who got so sheepish and embarrassed that he didn't really know what end he was standing on . . . Please don't go away angry . . . I think women were put into the world to tempt men.

"I think they were probably meant to tempt more than one man, whichever man happened to turn up at the right moment . . . I think civilization has found it more practical and efficacious to insist on monogamy. I think the old world-peopling instinct survives in most women. In some so strongly that they have nothing with which to combat it. You told me once that you and your husband had agreed that you could not afford to have more than four children, and leave a pleasant little fortune of thirty or forty thousand a year to each. You and he agreed. But nature didn't. That's why nature—not you—

came here tonight. I don't blame you a bit. I'm sorry and unhappy. When you started to throw yourself out of the window, nature said, 'Hold on. He's not the only man in the world.' "

"Then according to you," she broke in, "I should go and fling myself at the feet of some other gentleman who knows a g-g-good thing when he sees it, and tempt him."

"That's the nature of it," admitted Manners. "But because of our laws and institutions and religion, if you like, neither Tom, nor Dick, nor Harry will do. There's only one man for you to tempt and that man is your husband. . . . Your children will have forty thousand a year apiece. Don't you think that any one of them would rather be left with a beggarly twenty thousand than—never to have been born at all?"

"I think you are a disgusting cad!" she exclaimed. "I don't wonder your wife divorced you."

Manners flinched. He had already learned that Diana was going to have a child, and the numbness which had held his sensibilities in subjection was beginning to wear off. He bowed his head a little and said nothing.

"Tell me," she said, really quite a horrid sneering look on her pretty face, "that *some* day I'll be glad that you insulted me and sent me home like a naughty whipped child."

"Some day," he said very gently, "I hope you will be glad that a very unhappy man was still in love with his wife, who had left him, and that you had had no hand in making some other man who loves you

legitimately and in perhaps the same way, as unhappy as that."

From that moment his mind ran more and more on the fact that Diana was going to have a child and the longing for his own child grew upon him.

In May he wrote to Diana asking her to let him have Tam at least for the summer months. Diana refused, almost curtly. She did not go into her reasons for refusing.

She had the impulse to tell him the truth. "I won't let you have her," she might have written, "because the happiness that I looked forward to is ashes. I don't love my husband. I am bowed to the ground with shame and humiliation. But I am not going to play this husband false. There is good in me, and I shall try to redeem my sins against you, by doing right by him. I have only Tam to keep me going. Without her I should falter and fail. Somehow I have got to keep my head up. God means me to. I am going to have a baby. If my husband wants others I shall give them to him if I can. God cares more about the children than about the complex motives that bring them into the world and keep them out . . ."

But Manners could know nothing of this.

"She is going to give him the children that she denied me," he thought. "And she has taken away from me the one child that she gave."

Once more those intolerable wounds made in his nature by injustice opened wide and the bile and gall gushed out of them. He wrote Diana one terrible letter. Then he left the city, and went for some weeks into the Canadian forests with a half-breed

to guide him. He fished very little, ate very little, smoked a great deal, and asked a great many questions which the half-breed answered according to his experience of life in the back woods, and their settlements.

"If your wife, Wambolt," he asked, "fell in love with another man and wanted to leave you, what would you do?"

"Kill that man for sure, and beat her up good."

"If you wanted more children and she wouldn't have any more?"

"I give her good beating, then."

"But suppose you fell in love with another woman and wanted to leave your wife? That would make a difference, wouldn't it?"

"She beat me up then," said the half-breed. "Maybe she scratch her own face, and shoot me down."

In any case you wouldn't mess and fuss and wrangle and dispute and get bad and good advice from the neighbors."

"Got no time," said Wambolt. "Too much trouble to buy food and shoes and keep warm."

Manners spent a week in Quebec.

He had begun now to think very seriously of spiriting Tam away to Canada. He felt that he could not do without her and ought not. "Diana," he thought, "has everything she wants. I have nothing. It isn't fair."

He inspected several houses that were for rent, and visited some elementary schools.

"Diana could come to see Tam when she liked," he thought. "But soon she will be so busy with her new

family that she won't be able to come very often. Tam and I wouldn't have to stick in Canada. There's all Europe, and the wonderful Rivieras."

And he determined finally that he must have Tam and that if necessary he would steal her.

Diana had no more been fair about Tam than about anything else. He could never love any woman but Diana. That was proved. Nevertheless the love that he had for her drew back as it were and hid all its brightness in some dark cavern of his heart.

How badly Diana might feel at losing Tam was no longer any concern of his. She had made her bed. Let her lie in it. Losing Tam would merely be one of the rough spots. Let Fenn comfort her.

He could be happy if he had Tam. He could do fine work and leave her well-off. Without her he felt that he had shot his bolt, and could not bend his cross-bow again. He had suffered too much, and his creative impulse needed someone to love all the time and someone to love him back.

"I will give Tam little responsibilities," he said. "And make her feel from the first that she is of definite practical use and importance to me. That will help to make her happy."

But Mary Hastings had heard with mingled sorrow and alarm of Frank Manners's determination to steal his little daughter, and take her out of the country.

"You haven't treated me fairly, Frank," she said. "You tell me that you have an important secret to confide in me, you make me promise that it shall go no further, and then you announce that you are going to commit a crime."

"Yes," he said, "I've been unfair; but this is life or death to me, Mary, and so I can't release you from your promise."

"And before I knew that there was *anything* in the wind," she said, "you made me tell you all about my visit with the Fenn's at Combers, and which was Tam's room, and about the ladder leaning against the woodshed . . . You have made me a party to the crime. I think I must tell you some more about that visit. Nothing that will help you. Things that might hinder you. Do you want to make Diana wretchedly unhappy? Somehow I think that she would be if she lost Tam. Somehow I think that Diana feels that she has lost everything that made life worth loving *except* Tam . . . "

"She said things to you like that? . . . Diana did?"

"She is too proud to confess that she has made a mistake. She will never confess it. She will never repeat it—or any of her old mistakes. She is greatly changed. All these things are in her face."

"Tired of him?"

"Not that. She never loved him, and now she knows it. She never loved anyone but you. She knows that now. She wishes that when that feeling for you died that she had been willing to make the most of her memories. She is trying very hard to be upright, considerate, unselfish and fine about everything."

She waited for her words to sink in and then went on.

"She feels that she has failed Tam terribly and

that she must never fail her again. Oh Frank, if you had wanted to punish her, you could not have so punished her as she has punished herself. If you take Tam away I think you will kill a soul which having passed through great wickedness and besmirchment is on its way to redemption."

But Manners did not melt into sympathetic admiration at this guess-work estimate of the new forces at work in the woman who had spoiled his life.

"What is the man like?" he asked.

"I think that he guesses what I guess, and that no man ever admired a woman more than he admires Diana. I think that he is a little trying about his money affairs, which do not march forward. And I think that deep down he has the horrible fear that some day Diana will get tired of being good and will serve him as she served you."

"Mary," he said. "Perhaps this will surprise you. I would not take Diana back if I could get her and she wanted to come. There is no getting over the injustice she did me. There is no cure for it. There is no forgiveness for anyone who committed the crime of separating Tam from me. Besides that I do not believe in divorce. It is not in my prayer book. I believe that my wife is living in sin, that her child in the sight of God will be illegitimate. I do not choose to have my own child brought up in such an atmosphere."

"If you fell in love again, Frank, wouldn't you marry again?"

"I?"

She had no need to probe the question any deeper.

"If Diana died, I might," he said. "But she is my wife and only death can end our marriage."

"Then why do you say that you would not take her back?"

"I am wrong to say that. I would. I'd have to. I meant that in my eyes she is utterly contaminated and soiled."

"But please—about Tam—you *must* change your mind. No man—not even you—is quite fit to bring up a little girl."

"As soon as there is another child in the house Tam will not receive impartial treatment from the man. It is better that Diana should die of grief than that Tam should grow up in an atmosphere of injustice."

"Oh, but Fenn is such a kind, really *nice* person. He wouldn't be unjust."

"Is he human?"

"Yes."

"Will he love his child more than he loves mine?"

"Of course, but——"

"Then in an excess of justice he will very likely favor my child at the expense of his own. That would be as bad for Tam as the other thing. My mind is all made up, Mary. And all the details are worked out. The elopement is for Saturday. I want Fenn to be on hand when Diana finds out that Tam is gone. She might do something foolish. . . . Tam's got good nerves. There won't be any disturbance. She sleeps with her window open of course. There won't be any noise."

At length Mary Hastings gave up trying to shake

him from his purpose. She wanted him to have whatever it was that he wanted. The tragedy of his heartbreak was all in his face now. She had never felt so sorry for any one. He only *thought* that he would be happy with Tam. So a man dying of thirst believes that water will make him happy. It will not. It will perhaps give him some ecstatic moments, but in the ultimate it will only renew his short lease of opportunity in which to continue the pursuit of happiness.

"He'll run off with Tam," thought Mrs. Hastings. "And no sooner safe in Canada than the injustice which he has done to Diana will begin to prey on his mind. In a little while he will return the child to her mother."

"Frank," she said aloud. "Diana has made no mistake which you have not advised her against long before she made it. A dozen times she has hurt herself badly and you have been in a position to say 'I told you so.' Any person of average common sense could have foretold that her reckless indulgence in excitements of all kind would get her into trouble. She would not listen to you. She seems almost to have touched the limits of perverse, blind unreasonableness and folly."

"She does," said Manners a little grimly.

"But you, Frank, you who were so wise for her, are you equally wise for yourself? Oh, I am not trying to make you leave matters as they are. By all means steal Tam if you must. But I tell you, that you are doing as headstrong, as unreasonable, as blind, perverse, and foolish a thing as ever Diana did. And here am I, your good friend——"

"My best!"

"——Seeing clearly into the obvious future, knowing what is best for you, and powerless to hold you back from folly or to influence you in any way."

"What would be best for me, Mary? How can I find any peace, or comfort or contentment in this world?"

"You cannot give Tam all that she needs. You can give Diana nothing that she needs. Find somebody who needs all that you have to give, and give it to her. You think that you were only meant to love once. Because you have ceased to be any of the things she needs to the woman you love, you refuse to be those things to any woman. . . . That lovely Mary Marsh you painted last winter, Frank . . . Oh, she holds her pretty head very high, and she would die before she confessed anything, and she would make you a good wife. She is the kind of woman you admire most. I *know* it. She is the kind of woman you thought Diana was. She is the kind of woman that Diana is now, now that she has made her final irretrievable mistake and has determined to make the best of it. . . . Marry her, Frank. The moment you find, which will be the moment you ask her, that you are giving her everything that she needs, asks or desires, all your poor rumpled spirit will smooth out, and you will love her."

"But I am married," said Manners.

"Nobody thinks that but you. And I am inclined to think that with you it is a pose. Look me in the eyes and tell me that it's not a pose——"

He met her eyes, and smiled a little wistfully.

"It isn't a pose, Mary."

It is a fact though that when a little later he quitted the Hastings House, he stood hesitating and looking up the avenue. That way lay the house in which the lovely Miss Marsh lived with her father the gay old admiral. She was hesitatingly pretty. The sittings that she had given him had meant a period that bordered on contentment. He had grown truly fond of her. It made him perfectly sick to think that she loved him. He hesitated I say and looked up the avenue. That way also, in a general direction lay Combers and the little house in which Tam and his wife lived with Ogden Fenn.

Presently he turned down the avenue and walked with quick long steps to the hotel at which he was stopping. A deep gloom had settled upon him, and a feeling of desperate uneasiness and presentment. He did not sleep at all that night. He made many attempts. Between times he read at a thick volume that he had found on the bureau.

A phrase that he came across stuck in his brain. He found himself repeating it many times the next day, with a kind of desperate hopefulness.

"This life is nothing." "This life is nothing."

CHAPTER XXV

Frank Manners could not ask any one to help him. To steal Tam was to break the law of the land. For himself the penalty mattered little. The day, Saturday, was very young when he started for Combers. He wished to spy out the land a little by daylight. He had bought a car of good make, and filled two valises with such things as he thought would be essential to his little daughter during their journey together. He had guessed at the sizes. Poor fellow, he had not seen her for a long time, and she had begun to shoot upward. From her letter he knew that one thing about her had not changed, and that was her love for him. She had signed her last misspelled sprawl "Your loving friend and daughter."

He passed a florist when a thought struck him. He stopped the car, and walking back to the shop, entered, and after a little talk with the clerk caused to be made up an old-fashioned bouquet. He had it sent to Miss Marsh, and with it the following note.

My dear Miss Marsh:

I am passing through this city, and because I wanted very much to come to see you, and *couldn't,* I am sending you some flowers to prove that I had the thought. If I have ever done anything good it is the portrait that I painted of you. That is because *you*

are good. And that is why I have sent you old-fashioned flowers. Goodness in women is getting to be a little old-fashioned. There's Heliotrope in this bouquet, for its sweetness, and honesty, for every reason, and Heartsease, for that is what I wish for you, and there's Rosemary which as all men know is for Remembrance.

I am starting on a long journey. Since I may not see you, how happy I am to have been born with a splendid memory for faces, and for the things that are splendid in character.

Faithfully your friend,

FRANK MANNERS.

"Miss Marsh," mused the clerk, when the haggard customer had gone his way. "She won't stay *Miss* Marsh long, if that gentleman has anything to say about it. Eh, Miss Chiro? He sent her Rosemary and Heartsease, which is the Latin for pansies and while he was writing the note to go with them the sw— perspiration ran off him."

"It's a warm morning," sniffed Miss Chiro, and she finished entering the transaction in the ledger.

The clerk was wrong. Mary Marsh never changed her name. The author holds no brief for his sex. As often as not it's the woman who's the wild goose. Most often it is neither. And when you deal in Faithfulness it is safest to mark the package "fragile and perishable."

Frank Manners felt better somehow for having sent the flowers and written the note. The gloom left him, and during the long drive his senses were often pleas-

antly filled and even thrilled with the beauty of the landscape and the color and odor of flowers.

He reviewed many passages in his life with a lively if wistful pleasure.

"After all," he thought, "I have loved and I have been loved. Surely all this wretchedness of heart must soon pass away. I have blamed other people for their failures far more than I have ever blamed myself for mine. With Tam I shall find peace and contentment."

As he drew near Combers he became exhilarated and excited. He had not before entering realized how his soul panted for the sight and the sounds of his little daughter. Oh, to have her on the seat beside him, pressed hard against him, the car tearing forward, and all about them the night!

Having looked over the lay of the land and discovered a little wood road, near Fenn's house, in which he might leave the car, Manners drove farther into the mountains and returned to Combers after dark. He backed the car into the mouth of the wood road and doused the lights.

Then occasionally flashing a torch he followed a path which he had explored earlier in the day and which led to the edge of the little clearing in which Fenn's house stood. At that point he sat down to wait until one hour and a half after all the lights in Fenn's house had been extinguished. But, since he had eaten nothing from early morning, hunger (he did not know that it was hunger) disturbed him and made him restless.

Gradually the forest became alive with the noises

of the little things that walk stealthily at night. A little screech owl obtruded, but flew away after a little. The air had turned very brisk and exhilarating.

About eight o'clock a light shone in the window of Tam's room. Now and then a shadow, as of something vast and spectral came between the light and the window. Manners shook and trembled jerkily like a man with a chill. He strained every faculty to try and catch a sound of her voice. But could not.

"How often," he thought, "when she was a baby I have taken her in my arms and walked about the garden paths at dusk. *She* could see things in the bushes and behind them that I could not see. Pygmies, gnomes, Rewards, and Fairies most like. How she would gurgle at them! How her great eyes would shine!"

The light in her window went out.

"What does God think of all this?" he wondered. "Here sit I alone in the cold. Yonder in the warm house my wife sits with another man. Her body has no secrets from him. For whole days I have passed up and down before the vigilant tribunal of my own conscience, turning as I passed that nothing of me might be hid. I have done wrong. I have been a fool. But I have done right, and I have been wise. I have done nothing which in any way justifies the torture to which I have been subjected——"

His meditation melted into argument and interrogation half-earnest, half-whimsical.

"Almighty God," he thought. "If you *are* almighty, why are you also called all-merciful? Is it all-merciful to treat a poor little shrimp like me quite so

rough? I don't say that it *isn't*. I ask for information. This world is full of sick. The sickest of all these are those who are sick at heart. Was it all-merciful when you decreed that disease should be contagious instead of health, and that wretchedness and unhappiness should be the common lot, and dirt and poverty and envy and lust? You are called also the All-Wise. Are you then still in an experimental mood, oh, God?"

His thoughts were without irreverence. Puzzlement over all such things had been habitual with him since boyhood. In the telling American phrase: he came from "Missouri," and wanted to be "shown."

"Now upon my soul and honor," he thought, "I do not know if what I intend to do this night is right or wrong. Give me a sign."

The author is not so presumptuous as to say that a sign was not immediately given. He is not so presumptuous as to say that one was. He records only that in the very next crumb of time, a star, dizzy perhaps with its own problems, lost its balance, and fell from the heavens. For a moment a long train of fiery sparks marked the splendor of the path along which it had whirled to extinction.

I do not know if Manners's resolution was actually shaken or not. I think that the coincidence must have disturbed him a little, for he said to himself, as if to justify himself.

"That sort of sign was all right in the first century, but it is too old-fashioned for the twentieth. Give me a sign that I can understand—something simple and direct like—like striking me dead."

Somehow he wished he hadn't said that, even to himself. It had a flippant if not blasphemous effect upon his sense of fitness.

"It would have been in better taste," he thought, "to have asked Him to endow some little woodland creature with the power of human speech, to have sent it to perch upon my shoulder and to whisper the answer in my ear."

There stole suddenly and quietly and sweetly out of the house, as familiar to him as any of his most happy and impassioned and heart-breaking memories, the prelude to a little song. Diana's voice followed. And a wild thrill went through his blood.

He had no need to hear the articulate words. They were burned in his heart:

"What shall I say of her?
All that I may of her
All that is sad in her
Sweet in her, glad in her
Comes to my heart as her name to the lips of me
Wakens and pulses and thrills every thought of me
Choose what I could of her,
Think what I would of her
All that is worst of her
All that is good of her
Sways me and draws me
To love every mood of her—
Changefully changeful,
My Lady of Moods."

Then there came out to him the chorus, wonderfully strengthened and impassioned by the addition of a man's voice, an astounding voice, a glorious voice.

Why it should have surprised Manners to learn that Ogden Fenn had a beautiful voice is unknown. Yet

it is doubtful if anything in this world could have surprised him much more.

"'Heart of my Heart!
She has broken the heart of me,
Soul of my soul!
Who will never be part of me,
She whom I love, but will never be love of me
Song of my sorrows—My Lady of Moods.'"

The singing ended, and there was a time of silence. But the night creatures of the wood had been awed into a silence that lasted until the beginning of the next song.

"That's not the way a happy man sings," thought Manners. "He, too, has sensed the sweet liquor in the cup turned bitter at the touch of his lips. His heart is hurt, but he worships her. Oh, what do I care *what* she gives him if she doesn't want to give! Let him 'paddle in her neck' as the wicked king paddled in the neck of Hamlet's mother." And his thoughts floated back to college and to a jingle, old even then, but sometimes sung:

"Oh a hero's song I sing
His story shall my pen mark
And he was not a king
But Hamlet, prince of Denmark
With a woken noken nure
And a woken noken noko,
With a woken noken nure
Higho! Highoddy.'"

It is said that in the moment of a man's death before the last glimmering of his consciousness there rushes in review the whole of his past life. There was nothing moribund about Frank Manners. He

had never been more tensely alive than during the whole of that day. Yet it is true that during the long drive and during the long vigil below his little daughter's window, he had had a bewildering number of glimpses at the whole of the life that he had lived.

There was no prelude this time. Very simple and direct, and very wistful too and unhappy and questioning and appealing came Diana's voice, sustained by a questioning and accompaniment.

"'I know not when the day shall be,
I know not when our eyes may meet,
What welcome you may give to me
Or will your words be sad or sweet.
It may not be till years have passed
Till eyes are dim and tresses gray,—
The world is wide, but, love, at last,
Our hands, our hearts, must meet some day.

I know not are you far or near,
Or are you dead, or that you live,
I know not who the blame should bear,
Or who should plead or who forgive;
But when we meet some day, some day,
Eyes clearer grown the truth may see,
And every cloud shall roll away,
That darkens love, twixt you and me.'"

One by one the lights in Ogden Fenn's house went out, until there was no light left. Frank Manners sat on in the darkness. And for a long time he cried like a little child. . . .

When a flash of his torch upon the face of his watch showed that after the extinction of the last light a full hour and a half had passed, he rose to his feet, and for a few moments stood and looked upward at the amazing scarf of stars that is flung across the Nubian shoulders of the night.

He spoke aloud in his quiet, well-bred voice:

"Am I about to do right or wrong?"

As is customary when men turn their faces upward and ask questions, there was no answer.

"Very well," then said he. "Here goes!"

Tam waked. She could see that a head and shoulders were framed in her window. They were black and flat as if cut out of cardboard. There was just enough starlight to outline them.

She came of gallant stock. And she was the proud possessor of an electric torch. She pointed this at the black cardboard head, and touched the button. In the scientific miracle of the flash the flat cardboard changed into reliefs, and modelings and chiselings. It changed into the face that she loved best in all the world.

There was a wonderful story smiling in her father's eyes and about his mouth. The smiling seemed to say to her "silence—courage."

For the protection of his isolated house Ogden Fenn kept in one corner of his room a double barreled twelve-gauge shotgun loaded with number eight shot.

In raising the ladder to the window, it had made one sharp rasping sound against the shingled side of the house. This sound had waked Fenn and brought him, gun and all, on barefoot tiptoe into Tam's room. He had looked out of the window and down. He had discovered the ladder and the bulk of a man in the act of ascending it. Then he had backed away and crouched low, and there he was all this time, his gun levelled. He had no intention of shooting. It was in his mind to get the drop on the housebreaker, arrest

him and turn him over to justice. He was not in the least frightened, but he was nervous and trembling, which was only natural.

The flash of light which had revealed the father to the daughter, revealed to Ogden Fenn the man he had so wronged and outraged. And he did that thing which of all things in this world he would have wished the least to have done. He pulled both triggers of his gun.

The effect of no weapon is more frightful than that of a shotgun at three or four feet. Of Frank Manners's face when they came to him lying on his back at the foot of the ladder there was nothing left that was recognizable. But Diana recognized him instantly.

There they stood, those two, in their nightgowns and bare feet, looking at the dead man where he lay—between them.

Had you stood behind Fenn so that he was between you and the lantern which he had stood on the ground, you might have noticed how badly knocked the man's knees were, and how they kept on knocking. It needed no effect of any transparency to show that the woman with the beautiful dishevelled hair was far gone with child.

Indeed it was to be born to her as the crowning horror of that night—a child without life.

The man kept trying to say something. He got it out finally:

"Don't look like that! I had a *right* to shoot. Every man's home is his castle. . . ."

"This man's home was *his* castle," said Diana. "But we stormed it, and on its ruins we founded the

ruins of our own. You and I don't matter. We've got to think of Tam and no one else. She must *not* know."

But Tam knew very well. She knew very well too what that wonderful smiling upon her father's face had meant.

"Silence—Courage."

She never cried. She never let them see that she didn't believe the carefully graduated lies which they felt in all honor bound to tell her. But the shock spoiled her sweet and good little life for her. It made her a little queer—morbid, her teachers said.

In Frank Manners's pocket, stained with blood that had leaked in from the cataclysm that had been his face, they found the last letter that Tam had written to him—the one that she had signed "Your loving friend and daughter." On the face of the letter he had scribbled some verses. It was a habit he had.

The letter disappeared.

One day, the following winter, it was recitation day for the little girls in Tam's class, and when it was Tam's turn to recite she stood up before them all, and with a queer little break in her voice she recited the queerest little set of verses that ever came out of a queer little child's mouth:

"Don't sing any hymns, don't pray any prayers,
Don't lick the boots of any God for me,
I'm too tired to climb even golden stairs,
When I die, just let me be.

On the deep-sea floor I'd as lief be laid,
As lief in the sour ground:
I don't give a damn where the bed is made,
If the sleep I sleep be long enough and sound."

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